THE LIVING MARX

DR G RAMAKRISHNA :

We do not regard Marx's theory as something completed and inviolable; on the contrary, we are convinced that it has only laid the foundation stone of the science which socialists **must** develop in all directions if they wish to keep pace with life.

—V. I. LENIN

* * *

It is only through Marxism that it is possible to see every situation in the light of the larger movements of history and thus to make its solution one integrated part of a joint movement. For the value of Marxism lies not so much in solving particular problems as in showing what problems there are to solve and which of them should have the greatest priority. It is not an abstract system into which the future has to be fitted, but a live and flexible method by which we can ourselves determine it.

—J. D. BERNAL

Cover: *Marx for India*
By: John Devaraj

G. Ramakrishna
Oct-23, 2003

THE LIVING MARX

By

Dr. G. Ramakrishna

Ma-Le Publications

Bangalore-82

April 1983

THE LIVING MARX — A collection of articles, reviews and essays by Dr. G. Ramakrishna, Reader in English, The National College, Bangalore-560 004. Published by Ma-Le Publications, 91, 41st Cross, 8th Block, Jayanagar, Bangalore-560 082.

Pages : iv+174

Price : Rs. 18

First impression : April 1983

Front Cover : John Devaraj

Back Cover : S. Raghunandan and N. Gayathri

Printed at :

Ila Printers
153, 4th Main Road
8th Cross, Chamarajpet
Bangalore-560 018

With the Readers....

This collection has been brought out in commemoration of the death centenary of Karl Marx, who, more than any one else, has been the beacon light for the oppressed toilers of the world in their path of liberation. A century has passed since his passing away, but it is everybody's experience that today there is no field of intellectual and creative activity where the profound impact of this gigantic thinker and activist is not felt deeply. The philosophy and programme enunciated by him is rightly regarded as the manifesto of the working people of the world.

Marxism is a guide to action. But that could be so only when the method of Marx is properly applied for the understanding of any given situation in all its dimensions. The Indian situation is no exception. An attempt is made in the following pages to look at certain aspects of our own situation. I am fully conscious of my limitations in an endeavour of this kind. My only hope is that the essays, however inadequate and incomplete, may serve as material for a further debate.

I acknowledge the debt of gratitude I owe to my teachers Professor S. Ramachandra Rao and Patankar Chandrasekhara Bhat who first taught me Indian Philosophy. The former also initiated me into systematic studies as my guide for the Ph.D. To Dr. Debiprasad Chattopadhyaya, my truest guide in all my studies, I owe more than I can express in words. I thank all of them humbly and dedicate this collection to all my comrades from different walks of life with whom I have the privilege of working closely.

My young comrades A. Usha, N. Gayathri, M. Sridhara Murthy and S. Raghunandan have helped me in a variety of ways in bringing out this book, especially in the selection of articles for inclusion here. I record my deep appreciation for their friendly assistance. I am grateful to comrade John Devaraj for his interest in the book and also for designing the cover. Finally, I cannot thank Mr. Gurumurthy and the fine band of workers of Ila Printers, Bangalore, enough for their untiring efforts in printing the book within a short time. I crave the indulgence of the readers for the few printing errors that have crept in.

Repetition of ideas in the essays included here could have been avoided. But I have not done so in order to leave rhem as they were first published and also to make each article a self-contained piece.

—G. R.

Table of Contents

		Page
1.	The Living Marx	1
2.	Indian Philosophy—Melody and Millstone	9
3.	Some Loud Thinking about the Bhagavadgita	29
4.	Empty and Black Boxes Explored	36
5.	Science and Ancient Indian Philosophy	47
6.	The Assault on Science in Ancient India	58
7.	Indian Science and Revivalism	67
8.	A Note on the Study of History	75
9.	The Problem of Caste	82
10.	The Economic War	96
11.	Musings on the Human Rights Day	110
12.	Disarmament, Peace and Education	121
13.	Current Trends in Kannnda Literature	133
14.	Supersition of Population Explosion	155
15.	Men and God-Men	162

THE LIVING MARX

A hundred years ago today, that is on the 14th of March 1883, "at a quarter to three in the afternoon, the greatest living thinker ceased to think. He had been left alone for scarcely two minutes, and when we came back we found him in his armchair, peacefully gone to sleep – but forever." These were the words of Frederick Engels, the lifelong companion and comrade in arms of Karl Marx, at the graveside after Marx had been laid to rest in Highgate Cemetary in London on 17th March 1883. Engels proceeded to add the following in the course of his speech: "Just as Darwin discovered the law of development of organic nature, so Marx discovered the law of development of human history; the simple fact, hitherto concealed by an overgrowth of ideology, that mankind must first of all eat, drink, have shelter and clothing, before it can pursue politics, science, art, religion, etc., that therefore the production of the immediate material means of subsistence and consequently the degree of economic development attained by a given epoch form the foundation upon which the state institutions, the legal conceptions, art, and even the ideas on religion, of the people concerned have been evolved, and in the light of which they must, therefore, be explained, instead of vice versa, as had hitherto been the case.

"But that is not all. Marx also discovered the special law of motion governing the present day capitalist mode of production and the bourgeois society that this mode of production has created. The discovery of surplus value suddenly threw light on the problem, in trying to solve which all previous investigations, of both bourgeois economists and socialist critics, have been groping in the dark.

"Two such discoveries would be enough for one lifetime. Happy the man to whom it is granted to make even one such discovery. But in every single field which Marx investigated– and he investigated very many fields, none of them superficially – in every field, even in that of Mathematics, he made independent discoveries.

"Such was the man of science. But this was not even half the man. Science was for Marx a historically dynamic, revoiutionary force...."

It was through this science that Marx envisaged the emancipation of humanity, which according to him "is a new organization of the social forces which will make man the master of those sources which give him life", as Franz Mehring put it. It is precisely this formulation that has invited the wrath of the detractors of Marx over the last one hundred years. Never has one man's thinking been so pivotal in the making of society as Marx's thought has been. Every year and decade since the days of Marx has witnessed a messiah declaring that he or she has finally demolished the theories of Marx, only to see the phoenix being subjected to yet another demolition effort by some other omniscient critic. It was the spectre of communism that haunted Europe during the days of Marx as he put it in the "Communist Manifesto" in 1848 and it is the spectre of Marx that has haunted the entire bourgeios world ever since. Even before he came into contact with Marx, Engels had penned the f o l l o w i n g about his future collaborator :

Who charges on his tracks with reckless rage ?
A dark-browed limb from Trier, a thorough rip,
Who neither walks nor hops, but springs upon his heels
And stretches high his arms into the air
As though his wrath would seize at once
The mighty tent of Heaven and tear it to the earth.
With clenched and threatening fist he rages without rest
As though ten thousand devils were dancing on his chest.

But this threatening fist was not indiscriminately employed by Marx nor did he advocate that. Another of his close friends, Wilhelm Liebknecht, observed rightly that Marx "was the best-hated but he was also the best–loved. The best-hated by the oppressors and exploiters of the people, the best-loved by the oppressed and the exploited, as far as they are conscious of their position. The oppressed and exploitep people love him because he loved them." Himself always in straits and constantly nagged by "the urgent necessity of making a living", Marx nevertheless worked quite cheerfully both at the intellectual and organisational levels. The extent of his hardship can well be appreciated if we note what his wife wrote in November 1849 when the fourth son, Guido, was born: "The poor little angel suckled so many cares and worries that it was always ill and in violent pains day and night. Since it came into the world it has not slept a single night properly, and never more than two or three hours at a time." This child died about a year after its birth. The family was evicted from the house in Chelsea and found shelter in a German hotel in Leicester Street and still later at a small house on Dean Street. Towards the end of October 1850 Marx wrote to his friend Weydemeyer : "At the moment my situation is that I must get hold of money under all circumstances in order to be able to go on working." Sometime in early 1851 he wrote in a bitter mood to Engels that there was not a single penny in the house "and at the same time we exploited the workers and worked for a dictatorship."

The critics of Marx tend to ignore that Marxism is essentially a method and then a guide to action. That way, perhaps, it is easier for them to counter Marxism, and not countering it might add to their despair only. As early as in 1887, however, Engels had pointed out in his letter to the party friends in America that Marxist theory did not claim the monopoly of all the means of grace like the Catholic Church, that it was no dogma, but the exposition of a process of development. "One should not make the inevitable confusion of the first

mobilization of working-class forces worse confounded by forcing the workers to swallow ideas which for the moment they were unable to digest, but which they would willingly accept later on," he added. In his biography of Marx first published in 1918 Franz Mehring has the following: "In accordance with Marx's whole attitude, his **Capital** is not a Bible containining final truths, but rather an inexhaustible source of stimulation for further study, further scientific investigation and further struggles for truth." The apparently remarkable work done during recent decades by such 'revolutionary thinkers' like Herbert Marcuse and exponents of 'the new class' like Milovan Djilas, not to speak of the new strategists for a revolution like Regis Debray, suffers from this totally unfounded understanding of Marxism which grants the status of an inexorable religion to it, while in reality it only seeks to give a formulation about the method of analysis of a given organism at a given time, be it a social manifestation, a philosophical disquisition, an economic crisis, a political upheaval or a cultural pattern. As that great physicist and fighter for peace, J. D. Bernal, put it, the philosophy of Marxism, called dialectical materialism, "is not a critique of science; it does not claim to be a substitute either for experimental method or for the logical proof of laws of theories, but it does in a very important way supplement science by providing a definite method of coordinating the larger groups of special sciences and in pointing the way to new experiment and discovery." He added further that "dialectical materialism cannot and does not claim to predict the times and details of events; it only claims to show that the general trend of political developments cannot run counter to the economic forces, and these in turn counter to the more unconscious development of science and technics." The charge of Marxism being economic determinism has been made so volubly and frequently that it is often taken for granted by the critics of Marxism and the pseudo-critics alike. The charge was suitably replied to by Engels in his letter to Bloch on 21st September 1890 and yet the charge is still made as if

it were a new discovery of some genius of today. Said Engels : "The production and reproduction of real life constitute **in the last instance** the determining factor of history. Neither Marx nor I ever maintained more. When somebody distorts this to mean that the economic factor is the **sole** determining factor, he is converting our proposition into a meaningless, abstract and absurd phrase. .... One could not assert without pedantry that, out of all the petty principalities of Northern Germany, Brandenburg was determined by economic factors alone to become the leader ; .... it would be ridiculous to explain by economic cause the origin of German syntax. .... Marx and I are partly responsible for the fact that at times our disciples have laid more weight upon the economic factor than belongs to it. We were compelled to emphasize its central character in opposition to adversaries who denied it, and there was not always time, place, or occasion to do justice to the other factors of the historical process." In his letter to Mehring on July 14, 1893 Engels had this to reiterate : "Marx and I are both to blame in one point. We both placed, and had to place, the chief weight upon the **derivation** of the political, legal, and other ideological notions, with their resulting acti ons, from economic facts. Consequently we neglected the element of their form (i. e., the actual manner in which they developed). .... Because we denied that the different ideological spheres which play a part in history have an **independent** historical development, we were supposed to have denied that they had any historical efficacy. At the basis of this is the undialectical vulgar neglect of reciprocity. Once a historical factor has been brought into the world it can react even upon its own conditions." The pejudiced views, therefore, that Marxism has no place for individual cosciousness or initiative, or that Marxism has prescribed a path for the evolution of society and that therefore there is hardly any need for anyone to do anything about it, and so on are outside the strictly scientific enunciations of Marxism. The man who could recite **The Divine Comedy**, or **Hamlet**, or a host of other classics could not have been so mechanical and prosaic as all that.

Progressive mankind throughout the world is observing the 100th death anniversary of this Marx who was a scientific visionary, a humanist to the core, a philosopher who not only interpreted the world but tried to change it, an organiser of the working class, whom he believed to be an instrument of change, a dialectical materialist, a thinker who laid bare the lacunae of idealist philosophy most decisively, a gigantic intellect who gave the world a methodology that could dissect, analyse all aspects of human creativity in the form of science, history, art, literature and the like, and a colossus whose thoughts were a guide to action and not finished products for mere copybook application. His writings are those of a genius endowed with both artistic excellence and scientific precision.

The decaying imperialist world with its crises-ridden economy and degenerate morality keeps attacking him, sometimes crudely and sometimes in a sophisticated manner, day in and day out. This very fact proves that none is more alive today than Marx is. The impact of his thoughts is felt in bourgeois science and other branches of learning and even they cannot afford to ignore him although they pronounce that he is a dead horse. They take recourse to religion though they are themselves irreligious according to their own concepts and attack Marx hoping that they can deceive the gullible people. They take recourse to pseudo-science and declare that Marx is outmoded and outdated and yet these ideologues are constantly at work manufacturing all kinds of false arguments to disprove him. When all else fails, of course, they take recourse to bullying tactics, to terrorist activities, to supporting racism and Zionism, to gunboat diplomacy, to the rapid deployment force, to the central command, to the limited nuclear war, to supporting military dictatorships and what have you. Still, Marxism marches on triumphantly and the imperialists know it, too. For, have they not witnessed events in Cuba, Angola, Vietnam, Nicaragua, and many other countries which only the other day were pastures where the imperialist could graze unmolested and unchallenged?

It is true that in many third world countries there is a situation which would baffle the most ardent Marxist. Lopsided development, petty bourgeois romanticism, continuation of the old forms of economic order and the corresponding ideological postures, lack of creative development of Marxism in these contexts, non-appreciation of the effect of imperialist penetration, and the near dogmatic attitude of the Marxist intelligentsia in these countries are among the factors that we have to reckon with while understanding the socio-political reality in these countries today. It is not unoften that some "Marxists" in India, for example, reject everything that is ancient as something that is a deadweight. Nothing could be further from Marxism than this stance. The spirit of revolt and struggle for enabling oneself to have an opportunity to have the manifold potentialities in oneself become manifest is not something that newly emerged on the scene after Karl Marx. All epochs have produced thinkers and activists motivated thus. They have developed their own philosophical doctrines, too, with this objective in view. What is therefore living and thus to be cherished and consolidated, and what is dead and therefore to be discarded is a question that every Marxist will have to seriously ask himself and find the correct answers.

We in India have the additional advantage in that Marx tested his theories in the background of the specific happenings in India during the 1850's when India was being bled under the throes of colonialism. If Marx learnt a lot through a study of Indian history, there is every reason why we should learn from Marx and understand our past and present with acumen so that we can look forward to the future with hope, confidence and strength. The inspiration drawn from Marx and the path of struggle outlined by him inaugurated a new society in 1917 under the leadership of V. I. Lenin who said that Marxism will triumph because it is true. We see the new society in the making elsewhere, too, today, be it in the struggles of the worker in the gold mines of racist

South Africa, of the agricultural labourers in the farms and estates of Brazil and Bolivia, the tortured labourers in the orchards of El Salvador, the hopeful peasants of Vietnam and Afghanistan, or the desperate battles of the Indian workers of all categories. All these are aspiring for a fresh world and the beacon of light leading them to that goal is Karl Marx.

March 14, 1983

INDIAN PHILOSOPHY — MELODY AND MILLSTONE

Indian philosophy, especially the school of Vedanta with its source in the Upanishads, has been the subject of endless panegyric on the part of writers on the subject. Here are a few choice examples of their exuberance :

"The Upanishads contain a scientific search for the substratum underlying the phenomenal forces of nature." "In the Upanishads we have more or less the coolness of intellectual argument exhibiting itself in a systematic search after the ultimate Reality." The thirteen principal Upanishads belong to the period between 1200 and 600 BC "and the later Upanishads of the above canon may be seen to be dovetailed into that next period of Indian thought, when Buddhism was germinating in India, when the Samkhya and Yoga were being systematised, and when the Bhagavadgita was being composed to finally hush the voice of the materialist and the atheist by synthesising the points of theistic significance in the Samkhya and the Yoga, and by gathering together the red-letter pieces of Upanishadic philosophy and welding them all up together into a theistic-mystic poem—the pattern of many similar imitations in days to come." "....With the single exception of the system of Lokayatas which insists that all moral conventions and ethical theories have been invented by clever weaklings, no other philosopher would seriously support the view that the preservation of one's earthly exitstence at all costs is the summum bonum of our life." "It would be a wrong reading of history if one were to take the grihya sutras, srauta sutras and dharma shastras as the reply of the Hindus to the liberalism that was in the air at the time. The first

thing that Hinduism did was to acknowledge the right of free thinking in all matters, not excluding the vedas; this alone can explain why in the sixth century BC so many heretical systems could simultaneously come into being."

The above quotations are all taken from different authors writing on Indian philosophy in various issues of a journal called **Philosophical Quarterly**. The bewildering style in them is unmistakable. They indicate by and large the usual tenor of a host of modern interpreters of Indian philosophy. This is more or less the general trend among our philosophers who strenuously justify the tenets of philosophical idealism to the struggling millions of the contemporary epoch, unmindful of the implications of the doctrine to the life of these teeming millions who work for their livelihood unlike those who lead parasitical lives. The reactionary content of the doctrine is many times sought to be submerged in a brilliant pool of seemingly astounding qualities of clarity, perfection, and invincible logic. The blatantly a-historical method followed by them is never an embarrassment to them, as in their case it might truly be said that the end justifies the means. The unexpressed end, of course, is the perpetuation of the socioeconomic status quo. The partial mutilation of the Indian philosophical texts that they unhesitatingly resort to, the aversion to a scientific analysis of the texts by placing them in their proper historical perspective, and the totally baffling formulation that they arrive at, apparently reflecting the views adumbrated in the texts, are only **some** of the unfortunate and incorrect practices of these diehard conservative traditionalists in the sphere of Indian philosophy.

Debiprasad Chattopadhyaya is as different from them as ivory is from jet. He is always cool, refreshing, invigorating and pulsating with analyses and deductions which make one confident of the strength of one's tradition, and approach to struggles. His earlier works like **Lokayata, Popular Introduction to Indian Philosophy, Indian Atheism** and numerous articles on

a variety of topics have been an incontrovertible testimony to this. The present work* establishes this claim even more authentically and vividly by laying bare the truth about Indian philosophy and its traditions through copious textual references which are analysed and discussed with the utmost competence. The best thing about the book is that it is pleasantly free from any vague and romantic panegyrics to Indian philosophy for its own sake and that no statement goes unsubstantiated. The whole book is a pointer to the fact that no inflated claims regarding Indian philosophy are valid or necessary and that there is enough positive content in it to enthuse us. Armed with the most magnificent and scientific methodology that we know of, namely Marxism, Debiprasad Chattopadhyaya unravels before us in the book both the diabolical and the dynamic in Indian philosophy and thereby performs a unique and yeoman service to the inheritors of that philosophy facing new challenges today.

The book does not purport to be an academic exercise merely and the author in his Preface pronounces the purpose, which in turn prescribes the procedure adopted. It is "an analysis of our philosophical traditions from the standpoint of our present philosophical requirements. These requirements, as understood here, are secularism, rationalism and science-orientation." The role of philosophy in the past and present needs to be clearly grasped for understanding the task the author has chosen to perform. "Blessed-are-the-poor-for-theirs-is-the-kingdom-of heaven" philosophy has through the centuries preached that mortal man must abandon mundane pursuits and pleasures and turn heavenward, for there is bliss and fulfilment in that alone. To shun the here and to glorify the hereafter is one sure way of imposing shackles on the working and struggling people. In the name of ultimate emancipation, the

---

* *What is Living and What is Dead in Indian Philosophy* by Debiprasad Chattopadhyaya, People's Publishing House, New Delhi, June 1976, pp xv + 656, price : Rs. 55.

people are made perpetual slaves to some abhorring ideas ; and they ensure the willing physical slavery of the oppressed, much to the relief and joy of the ruling classes. A dangereous reactionary idea, as much as a vigorous progressive idea, becomes a material force when it grips the minds of the people. One is an impediment to progress, while the other is an instrument of progress. Idealist philosophy, proclaiming to understand the world (or reality) and emancipate the people, does neither ultimately, and becomes a millstone round the neck of man. In the evolution of society, therefore, there is a specific point of time when both philosophy and science are made subservient to the selfish needs of a section of the people and the imminent glory and potential of philosophy and science as the redeemers of mankind as a whole are denied That is the stage where the working hand has receded and the thinking mind has come forward, with the result that the philosophy beneficial to the working man is undermined and the philosophy supporting the ruling class is branded the all-embracing philosophy. As Benjamin Farrington put it, "the emergence of a leisured class gives opportunity for reflection and elaboration of theory. It also gives opportunity for reflection and elaboration of theory. It also gives opportunity for theorising without relation to facts. Furthermore, with the development of classes, the need for a new kind of 'science' arises which might be defined as 'the system of behaviour by which man acquires mastery over man'. When the task of mastering man becomes the preoccupation of the ruling class and the task of mastering nature becomes the forced labour of another class, science takes a new and dangerous turn" (**Greek Science, Vol I, p 15**). What is true of science is true of philosophy also and both become tools in the hands of the ruling class to supplicate the working people.

But this is not an absolute situation in favour of the ruling obscurantist and idealist thinkers. In the course of history, there have been many battles waged by the oppressed against the oppressors. If the oppressors developed a philo-

sophy and reinforced it with the sanction and sanctity of law (called 'dharmaśastra' in our context), the oppressed also developed a world outlook and worked out a scheme of things. Quite naturally, the oppressing class in its own interest suppressed this philosophy and even twisted it to suit its taste and design. This thick and gloomy cloud of darkness which has haunted philosophy, Indian philosophy included, needs to be wafted away before the cool fragrant breeze of philosophy can enliven the spirit of the working man. The deadweight in Indian philosophy must be discarded as dead and the sustaining values in it nourished as living. Vivisecting Indian philosophy from this crucial point of view is what Debiprasad Chattopadhyaya ably attempts and that is what makes **What is Living and What is Dead in Indian Philosophy** so relevant to our needs, and for the fulfilment of our cherished aspirations- the goal of shaping society in such a way that there is no possibility of man being exploited by man.

The usual practice is to consider the different systems of Indian philosophy as theistic (astika) and atheistic (nastika) respectively. The atheistic systems are supposed to be those which do not recognise the validity of the Veda as the ultimate and infallible source of knowledge. The prime consideration of idealism and materialism as the distinguishing features of all systems of philosophy, including the Indian variety, is thus overlooked. So much so, quite an extraneous and irrelevant criterion, namely the authority of the Veda, has come to play the key role in the analysis of the characteristics and tenets of Indian philosophical systems. Chattopadhyaya, however, argues that the dichotomy between idealism and materialism is as much integral to Indian philosophy as to the philosophical thought of other countries. The recognition of the authority of the Veda by philosophers in India was not unoften the result of the powerful hold the law-givers had. Independent philosophical activity could not be carried on in an unstifled manner, thanks to the stranglehold of the law-givers. Even the classification of systems of philosophy as astika and

nastika is the prescription of Manu, the supreme among law-givers. One of the remarkable successes of Debiprasad's book lies in the analysis he has provided of the role of the law-givers in ancient Indian society. This he has for the first time brought out vividly by focusing attention on the fact that idealist philosophy was no more than a handmaid of the law-givers (p. 206). To escape the censor and censure of the law-givers, many anti-idealist philosophers had to find their own ways of camouflaging. Al-Biruni's evidence in the context of Varahamihira and Brahmagupta, two eminent ancient Indian astronomers, extensively cited by Chattopadhyaya, brings out the rigours which the seekers after truth in ancient India had to face (pp. 257 ff). It might here be noted in passing that our own scientists are not under as much duress as their ancient counterparts were. And yet paradoxically enough they are more servile to orthodoxy and conservatism than, say, Brahmagupta even. Kanada, the exponent of Vaiseshika philosophy, had to hoodwink the orthodox bigots by his tricks before expounding his theory of atomism. The profuse lip sympathy he pays to vedic orthodoxy and the occasional glorification of the priests and their privileges is what saves his theory from being crushed (pp. 262-63). Gotama, the author of the **Nyaya Sutras**, also cunningly does the same by allegedly repudiating the doubts concerning vedic injunctions, while all the time suggesting the impossibility of vedic authority being final (p. 264). For these philosophers, truth is the product of observation and inference. Interrogation, analysis and reason are for them the genuine avenues leading to the knowledge of reality. They do not even remotely concern themselves with the doctrines propounded by the Upanishads which are usually regarded as the fountain of philosophical wisdom (p. 272). The idealist positions are thus thoroughly rejected by them. The contempt for the material world and logic is only one step behind social contempt for the toiling masses, and the Indian idealist philosophers reach that position very soon. Logic is wretched according to Mahabharata and Ramayana(pp 193-94), not to speak of Manu. Reason is dubious to Sankara (p 203).

From this to the philosophy of denial of the world and rationalisation of social parasitism is not a long way (p 135). Instead of encouraging the processes of knowledge as an answer to the real and puzzling problems of man, idealist philosophy only fosters faith as the lone solution. Fideism and irrationalism are, therefore, almost consciously nurtured by idealism (p 212). This approach has yet another significant impact. It leads to the decrying of manual labour and dissociation from nature. The latter in turn puts an end to interrogation and the attempt to understand nature. The class basis of philosophy thus gets shifted. This is best illustrated in the evolution of Buddhism, which began as a virile thrust against the priest-cult and ended up as the most rabid idealist philosophy (p 169).

A total rejection of idealism means the acceptance of a secular, rational and scientific approach, while idealism has religion-orientation, faith in the scriptures, and superstitions in most of its major forms, for its accessories (p 234). The other major contribution of the anti-idealist schools of thought consists of the defence of practice as the real criterion of truth (p 235). There is a whole subsection in Chattopadhyaya's book entitled "Practice, the Criterion of Truth" (chapter 7, section 8, pp 354ff) which highlights the 'supreme verdict of experience' as the effective means of establishing the truth of knowledge. The most outspoken champions of this doctrine in the range of Indian philosophy are the Nyaya-Vaiseshikas whose basic conclusion is that "after a knowledge is proved true in practice, there remains no doubt about the proof; hence the question of proving the proof does not arise" (p 359). In fact, the insistence of the Nyaya-Vaiseshikas on practice is their sharpest weapon against idealism, and in their struggle against idealism they "brilliantly anticipate an epistemological position which contains the potentials for the rejection of idealism, making room for science and materialism" (p 363).

Contrarily, idealism subsists on "a complete separation between theory and practice—between wisdom and action—for the ultimate defence of the idealist outlook" (p 101) and this separation is sought to be sublimated through the philosophical quibble of the ultimately real and the partially real, or what is referred to as paramarthika satya and vyavaharika satya respectively. The Indian idealist philosophers constitute a united front on the basis of an 'essentially negative attitude', the ureality of the objects of knowledge (bahyartha-sunyatva), as Kumarila, a purva-mimamsa philosopher, has put it. This characterisation of the objects of knowledge as unreal is, as Debiprasad puts it, "the real pivot of idealism throughout its Indian career" (p 46).

The crux of Indian philosophy lies in the confrontation between idealism and its antithesis in the specifically Indian context. The procedure almost universally adopted by the Indian philosophers in their treatises is to counterpose an antithesis to a thesis and arrive at a judgement. Without two opposing views on a given philosophical question, any discussion is simply unthinkable. "Contradiction thus constitutes the essential precondition of philosophical activity" (p 7), which itself leads on to newer issues and resolutions.

At what stage of Indian history and under what conditions does Indian idealism emerge? It is obviously not the product of any subjective fancy, pure reason or mere mental speculation. Philosophy, like social life, has been and is susceptible to historical limitations. The difference between vedic and upanishadic philosophy, for example, is quite revealing in this connection. In the reckoning of the vedic poet, composing the vedic song is the equivalent of the carpenter making a chariot. It simply means that the Vedas do not decry manual labour. Rigveda (1.130.6) conceives the chariot-maker as a wise man. The indication is that contemplation alone does not make for wisdom. For the ancient poets, manual skill is itself a mark of wisdom

(p 142). It is only at a later stage that "secret wisdom" begins to parade itself in glowing colours by trampling on the more honest wisdom of skilful artisanship and the like. Illustrating it with copious references from the upanishadic texts, Chattopadhyaya concludes that "the ruling ideas of the Upanishads are not unconnected with the ruling powers of the upanishadic age" (p 115). The renowned Yajnavalkya and his fellow-speculators could not have gone about philosophising without the patronage of the nobles (p 124), which in turn would be impossible in the absence of the production of a surplus in society through improved techniques of production. The contrast between the early vedic period and the later upanishadic period is precisely this. In the early vedic period, "the devotion of a selected few of the community to the cultivation of pure speculation is not yet objectively possible, for the community does not produce enough surplus to meet their material requirements" (p 126). With the production of surplus and its aggrandisement by a few also develops the tendency towards idealism. Debiprasad Chattopadhyaya has put it in a nutshell in his introduction to **Lokayata** (p xxii): "..... so long as human consciousness retains its moorings in manual l a b o u r, it remains instinctively materialistic. For there is a sense of objective coercion about the labour process itself..... This is negatively substantiated by the fact that the emergence of the idealistic outlook in the human consciousness presupposes a separation of thought from action—of mental labour from manual labour—along with a sense of degradation socially attached to the latter. The result is an exhaltation of the spirit or consciousness—of pure thought or pure reason—to the status of a delusional omnipotence having, as it were, the power to dictate terms to reality. And this is the essence of the idealistic outlook."

It may be interesting to note here the discussion concerning vedic rituals or yajna which "must have originally been something like the magic rites still to be observed among

some present-day primitive peoples surviving in certain pockets of the modern world" (p 111). In their original form, magic rites are a source of greater confidence in themselves for the performers. The rites did not bring about (as they do not and cannot bring about now) any change in objective reality. Early man grappling with nature came to believe that he could exercise his authority on nature and control her through the magic rites. The genuine role of magic rites is most aptly summarised by George Thomson: "It changes their (performers') subjective attitude to reality, and so indirectly it changes reality." With the production of surplus, the rituals also assumed a new class character; they became their opposites. "These become tools for a new technique—that of **man's struggle against man**" (p 111). "The new norm is that of a split society in which the powers and privileges belong to the kings and nobles,, though secondarily also to their ideological apologists—the priests" (p 112). The tragedy is that this philosophy and social division still persist, even as a good number of our "scientists" still remain wedded to the outlook of the early performers of magic rites, insofar as they have greater belief in the soothing effect of a pseudo saint or 'god-incarnate' than in the prowess of science itself. But the redeeming factor is that the source-books of Indian idealism, namely the Upanishads, also present the pioneering scientific tradition of Indian philosophy which could act as an inspiring beacon of light for science-orientation today (p 118).

The chapter on the social function of Indian idealism (ch 5) is from this point of view a highly remarkable portion of the book. Idealist philosophy is the whip with which the ruling exploiting class regiments thinking. Those who accuse socialist societies, based on the laws of dialectical materialism, of regimentation had better understand this correctly. The law-givers of ancient India (and unfortunately our modern law-givers and dispensers are not always exceptions to this) professing unbounded adherence to the idealistic faith recorded their utter detest for 'free thinking' in the most unambiguous

language (p 171). Search for truth and quest after perfection under such conditions must needs remain elusive. The idealist philosophers who meekly submitted to the dictates of the law-givers had only the scholastic duty of adducing arguments in favour of the conclusions and social values stipulated by the law-givers. The rigidity of the caste system uncompromisingly nullified all seemingly lofty enunciations of the idealist philosophers. The profound monist philosopher, Sankara, and a host of others, declaring the universality of all souls nevertheless scrupulously differentiated the 'brahim soul' from the 'sudra soul' ! Some of the revolting prescriptions of the law-givers spearheaded by Manu send a shiver down the spine of any reasonably human individual. Attempts have been made by quite a few embarrassed historians and philosophers of modern India to explain away the treachery perpetrated on people of the lower castes in ancient India by pointing out that the system of caste division was no more than a mere rational social arrangement defining the division of labour among the members of society. They argue that labour-mobility was also there. To crown it all, they quote with a flourish the lines from Bhagavagdgita (4. 13) where caste distinction is said to be based on characteristics and action of the individual. These scholars do not even by chance refer to the multiples of statements of the law-givers on the issue. This is frankly unacademic and unethical, considering the fact that the law-givers ruled the roost and philosophers appeared on the scene only later to justify the ways of the law-givers to the populace. The law givers with no hesitation or reservation proclaim the view that caste is congenital and hence also the discriminations of the caste hierarchy. For example, Apastamba in his Dharmasutra states : "There are four castes and each preceding group is superior to the subsequent group by **virtue of the birth itself.** The non-sudras are to perform holy duties like studying the Veda, offering oblations in sacrifices, etc. The duty of the sudra is to serve those of the other upper castes. The higher the caste of the person chosen by the sudra to serve, the greater the reward accruing to him" (Catvaro varnah brahmana kshatriya

vaisya sudraah. Tesham purvatah purve **janmatah sreyan.** Asudranam adustakarmanam samupayanam vedadhyayanamagnyadheyam phalavanti ca karmani. Susrusha sudrasyetaresam varnanam. Purvasmin purvasmin varne nihsreyasam bhuyah). The great Manu ordains that the expiation for the killing of a sudra is identical with that for the killing of a cat, frog, lizard, owl, or crow (chapter 11 of **Manusmriti**). Gautama says that a sudra adulterer shall have his organ cut ; his brahmin counterpart shall, however, only pay a fine ! What do the Indian idealist philosophers do in the face of such ordinances ? — Recapitulate, strengthen the hold of the law-givers by giving a philosophical foundation to the prescriptions of these law-givers, and thereby perpetuate the misery that the evil system gives rise to (pp 195-201). This is not done unconsciously either, Nor is it a peculiarly Indian phenomenon. The Indian law-givers and idealist philosophers have their monstrous and cunning counterparts in other countries and civilisations. Debiprasad gives us a succinct view of these others in a memorable section of the book (ch 5 section 4) entitled "Social Function of Superstition" (pp 178-85). This chapter is, indeed, a must for everyone who wants to understand the ramifications of idealist philosophy, of which superstition is an inseparable part. Isocrates, Plato, Polybius, Strabo, Kautilya, Manu and Medatithi have all one thing in common and that is to defend the fortress of the oppressors through forceful pleas in favour of idealism and superstition.

This murky record of idealism as a vicious weapon on the one hand and philosophical obscurantism on the other has a shining contrast in materialism. Once again the historical limitations of the ancient Indian materialist philosophers cannot be overlooked. The rudiments of materialism are quite clear in many anti-idealist schools of thought and the fundamentals quite pronounced in the case of the Lokayata school. The essential feature of materialism is the assertion that "since this world is essentially material, the first cause that we can infer for it must also be material" (p 92). This is the

position accepted by the Samkhya school. It or its variations form the antithesis of Indian idealism. The rejection of idealism in Indian philosophy is threefold at the hands of the Lokayata, Samkhya and Nyaya-Vaiseshika respectively. All three of them defend the reality of the external world as against its unreality posited by the idealists. They are all one in yet another manner, too: they want "to work out **an explanation of the objective world in terms of their respective theories of the nature of matter**" (p 286). But they differ among themselves in certain details, especially in regard to their varying concepts of matter. The Lokayata views matter as the physical elements, Samkhya as primeval subtle matter, and Nyaya-Vaiseshika as atoms. The commitment to the theory that "matter is the ultimate constituent of the world" is equally firm in all three of them (p 288). While discussing this issue, Chattopadhyaya initiates a discussion on the correctness or otherwise of the application of the term 'realism' to describe Samkhya and Nyaya-Vaiseshika positions of anti-idealism (pp 288-98). It is a term used to designate Samkhya and Nyaya-Vaiseshika by those who take 'materialism' in an extra-philosophical sense. For some reasons best known to themselves, they shun the word 'materialism' because of its alleged 'vices and vulgarities' and reserve the term for describing Lokayata ! 'Realism' has a definite connotation in the context of the history of European philosophy. It is not the same as materialism although it is opposed to idealism; for, it is opposed to materialism as well. Among the idealist schools, Lokayata is the materialist school of thought par excellence. Besides holding the view that consciousness is ultimately the product of matter and hence matter is primary and consciousness secondary (p 294), the Lokayata, alone among the schools of Indian philosophy, is "free from sundry superstitions" and hence "most remarkable among the Indian materialists" (p 297). The Samkhya and Nyaya-Vaiseshika views regarding consciousness are very close to the Lokayata view. From the point of view of philosophical argumentation against idealism, however, it is the atomistic Nyaya-Vaiseshika school that

develops a theory of the nature of matter to explain a wide range of natural phenomena. The content of materialism in Nyaya-Vaiseshika is, therefore, immense. But modern scholars fail to take note of it because of a body of sundry superstitions forming part of it, more or less as an appendage and not as an integral part (p 298). The theory of atomic conjunction advocated by the Nyaya-Vaiseshika has its own problems alright. But, as Debiprasad puts it, "judged by us retrospectively, it really means that in the development of Indian science, the satisfactory solution of one problem concerning the nature of matter ushers in certain new and as yet unsolved problems. But this is precisely the way in which science advances in the past, as it is still advancing.... Our knowledge of the nature of matter is ever-progressive ; the more we know about it the clearer do we feel that much more remains to be known, and therefore also grows the urge to know better. At least this is the position of the materialists as contrasted with that of the idealists, who refuse to be satisfied with anything short of the final and absolute truth and thus fail to stimulate scientific inquiry" (p 400). Lenin eminently summarised it when he said that "materialism clearly formulates the as yet unsolved problems and thereby stimulates the attempt to solve it". This is a wholesome recipe which many of our scientists fail to understand and thus rush to the hypocritical saints and selfstyled saviours to learn the elements of science, thereby betraying and insulting the basic creed of science itself.

It has already been mentioned above that the relationship between matter and consciousness is a cardinal question tackled by different systems of Indian philosophy. The importance of this question cannot be overstated. It is not simply a curious theoretical question in ontology. The material origin of consciousness properly understood "opens new horizons for the real understanding of human history" (p. 492). Nowhere is it dogmatically argued in materialism that consciousness, as an evolute of social being or material conditions, has no creative role to play. All that is stressed is that it "is not

the sole creative force, as imagined by the idealists" (p 493). The theory of the material origin of consciousness, attributed to the Lokayatas universally, is as old as the Chandogya Upanishad where Uddalaka Aruni, through experimental demonstration, instructs his son Svetaketu regarding the first principle for the explanation of nature (p 476). Devoid of any religion-orientation and obscure mysticism, this theory of Uddalaka reminds one of the Samkhya philosophy, "the starting point of which is that, since being cannot be produced from nonbeing, the essential nature of the cause is to be inferred from the essential nature of the effect" (p 477). Mind, by which Uddalaka means consciousness, is viewed as having a distinct material origin and this is supported by a number of illustrations. The idealists cleverly remain silent while commenting on the passages in which Uddalaka gives the above exposition (p 481).

The Nyaya-Vaiseshika view is that consciousness "is essentially a transient phenomenon, somehow or other temporarily produced by the peculiar collocation of a number of intrinsically unconscious (Jada) entities, most of which are material" (p 404). That doyen among the interpreters of Indian philosophy, Professor M. Hiriyanna, recognises this phenomenon in Nyaya-Vaiseshika as a position "scarcely distinguishable from that of the charvakas" (p 411). If the Nyaya-Vaiseshika did not take a leap forward from this position to explain how consciousness emerges from the essentially unconscious, it was only because of their reluctance to be identified with the outspoken materialists, namely the Lokayatas, who were the special target of attack from the orthodox schools. But still they went far enough when they accepted consciousness as a property of the soul under certain given conditions of matter (p 407). The Samkhya, which has the unique distinction of being tampered with at will by the 'repairers' of Indian philosophical tradition, views matter as primary and consciousness as secondary. The boldest theoretical formulation on this matter comes from the Lokayatas. The Samkhya

position is so close to the Lokayata view that the irritated Sankara brands the Samkhya an equivalent of Lokayata materialism. Nothing could be more sacrilegious than to be identical with the Lokayata! So, no refutation is really needed in that case, concluded Sankara. The dog has been branded mad; and that is as good as having been shot! Queer logic that to demolish the Lokayata and the Samkhya views of consciousness as a product of matter. The Lokayata view, according to Sankara's observation, is that consciousness belongs to the body, and is hence not the characteristic peculiarity of the spirit. The decisive question for the Lokayata is whether the material elements alone, in spite of each of them being intrinsically unconscious, go to the making of living bodies possessing consciousness. Can, in other words, consciousness emerge from unconscious matter? (p 426). The remarkable thing about the Lokayatas is that notwithstanding the severe limitations imposed on them by the lack of elaborate scientific data, they do make a bold theoretical attempt at an explanation of the origin of consciousness from matter (p 427). In explaining their position, the Lokayatas draw the analogy of the non-intoxicating ingredients giving rise to an intoxicating liquor. Where did the intoxicating (or the intoxicating quality) come from? Even so, consciousness emerges from the unconscious elements. It is significant that the Lokayatas fall back on naturalistic phenomena and not spiritualistic ones to explain the enigma. The basic assumption of the Lokayatas that life (consciousness) originates from inorganic matter (unconscious) is a postulate of present day science also and this speaks volumes for the science-orientation of the lokayata system. Faced with a stout and determined defence of this position by the Lokayatas, the refutation of the theory at the hands of the idealists only shows their puerility and pedantry "as all defence of superstition against science is perhaps destined to be" (p 446). So much is the inconvenience and discomfort for the idealists that as the only avenue of escape they impute some ugly and unreasonable philosophical opinions to the Lokayatas and devastatingly

refute them with triumph, much in the fashion of the present-day enemies of Marxism 'obliterating' Marxism by attributing fancy theories to the doctrine. This is somewhat unusual for Indian idealist philosophers who normally represent the opponents' viewpoints fairly accurately in their treatises and even anticipate the further points likely to be made by the opponents on the basis of their accepted positions. It only underlines the invincible quality of the Lokayata theory. The potential of Lokayata is realised in the much later scientific materialism known as Marxism (p 491).

The chapter on "Refutation of idealism" (ch 7) is another very important section of the book. The main philosophical thrust against idealism comes from the Nyaya-Vaiseshikas and Kumarila, an exponent of Purva-Mimamsa. The crushing blows of Nyaya-Vaiseshika against idealism are really breath-taking. The idealist is invited to accept the inviolable truth that "it is obligatory for the philosophers to operate with the pramanas (means of valid knowledge), i.e. to depend on experience and reason" (p 306). On both these counts, namely experience and reason, idealism stands shattered. If the idealist argues that things have no independent existence or reality, it means that he has recognised the existence of the proof for his conclusion, if of nothing else; if he does not argue thus, his basic theory that the objective world has no reality stands defeated. The dilemma of the idealist is further analysed by Kumarila (p 373). Not being satisfied with the above line of argumentation alone, Kumarila launches an attack on the incredible claims of yogic supernormal experience and denounces the same as fictitious (p 319). A subjective hallucination may come to be branded as 'supernormal' experience and Kumarila is not obliged to accept it as valid. "Only standard experience has relevance for philosophy" (p 321). He has nothing but contempt for mystery-mongering and with detailed arguments he disposes of the idealist position that objects of experience have no reality (p 323). The Indian idealist philosopher thus scoffed at by the opponents of idealism takes shelter under his special

brainchild's roof, namely the differing levels of reality. How the opponents of idealism reject this notion, we have already seen above.

The next and last major question for Indian Philosophy is the concept of freedom. The spiritualistic orientation of Indian Philosophy, which according to many an Indian and western analyst of Indian philosophy is its distinguishing feature, is as inescapable as it is nauseating. It is almost used like a drug, one might say. The oppressing class has used and still uses the concept of freedom in idealist Indian philosophy as the final, apparently unvanquishable, missile against the rising masses of the people. The law of karma acts as an accessory to this. The damage done by the two together is simply infuriating. The pet theory is that the whole stupid world is an illusion and that emancipation pertains to the hereafter. To be worthy of the 'hereafter', one should be properly averse to the 'here', so that one might overcome the endless cycle of births and deaths. Freedom in idealist Indian philosophy means the absolute extinction of the illusion about the world. "This is the essence of the metaphysical monstrosity which all the idealists proclaim as the right understanding of freedom". "There remains nothing to be done about the world, except to cultivate a philosophical contempt for it as the product of perverse imagination" (p 571). The dangerous machinations of a perverse philosophy of freedom like this cannot be lost on us, because in real life we see real men and women groaning under this philosophy which has given such power to the oppressing class. Bondage, slavery and serfdom being perpetuated under the sweet nomenclature of freedom is what this concept is all about.

A close analysis of this concept in Nyaya-Vaiseshika shows that it is grafted on the system and is accepted as a safety measure against the otherwise inevitable onslaught of the ever-menacing law-givers (p 588). It is a concept which is totally inconsistent with the Samkhya standpoint (pp 592 and 596). It

is extraneous to the Purva-mimamsa also (pp 597-608) "Among the opponents of Indian idealism, the Lokayatas are the only philosophers to call for a total rejection of the idealist view of soul and its salvation.... The first precondition for moving towards a sensible conception of freedom is to scrap all nonsense about it" (p 609). The Lokayatas recognise that 'certain views and attitudes admirably suit the economic interest of the parasitical class, or, as they put it, are created to be the source of their livelihood' (p 613). A faith-oriented philosophy taking cudgels against logic may naturally be expected to abhor the Lokayata position. But the precarious position of the Nyaya exponents like Vatsyayana is understandable. Being the ideological propagandists on behalf of the oppressing class, they were hampered in taking a suitable view of freedom as a genuine need of the people. They willingly surrendered to the opium of spiritualism. If the positive factors in Nyaya-Vaiseshika are overwhelming, this negative formulation is not only unfortunate but positively misleading and disastrous (p 619). The subservience to the law-givers makes even an eminent scientist like Prasastapada of the Vaiseshika school a split personality and he is thus the prototype of our contemporary scientists taking a dip in the Ganges to save the moon or the sun from the clutches of Rahu and Ketu at the time of the eclipses. 'Where traditional Indian philosophy really fails is thus in its effort to solve the problem of freedom. But this failure can be explained and hence it is possible for Indians today to overcome the most serious limitation of our philosophical tradition' (p 629). It is to be specially noticed that in the Chandogya Upanishad, Uddalaka Aruni did not refer to any possibility of 'final release' while imparting instruction to his son about the first principle behind the multiplicity of nature. His more immediate concern was an intellectual or essentially scientific curiosity (p 486). It was reserved for the more leisured class of people like king Janaka and the court-saint Yajnavalkya to discuss immortality of the soul, ultimate freedom of the soul, and allied questions.

Dialectical materialism has its own way of resolving the age-old tangles in society. In our context, when the Indian working class is increasingly being guided by the doctrine of dialectical materialism in its movement, there can only be one development to be expected. And that is, 'caste society, which is only a form of class society, meets its ultimate historical destiny—the destiny of making room for classless society, towards which millions of working men and women are marching today' (p 532). This course is irreversible. The brighter aspects forming part of the anti-idealist enunciations of the systems of Indian philosophy also serve as ideas assisting us to reach that destiny. Debiprasad Chattopadhyaya deserves our gratitude for having dealt with these in a masterly and purposeful manner. This book, **What is Living and What is Dead in Indian Philosophy**, like the earlier works of Chattopadhyaya, is a challenge to the academic world of India and also a call to understand the path correctly and scientifically. It is but natural, therefore, for us to eagerly look forward to his next book entitled 'Science and Society in Ancient India'.

—Marxist Miscellany
No. 7, March 1977

SOME LOUD THINKING ABOUT THE BHAGAVADGITA

Karl Marx pointed out that truly human liberation is to be achieved only by breaking **every** kind of bondage that mankind has been subjected to in the course of the evolution of society through different social formations. Emancipation has its philosophers even as oppression has its agents and defenders. Marx as the most thoroughgoing scientific analyst of society has also indicated that the roots of religion are essentially earthly and hence the tent of heaven cannot be pulled down by remaining in the clouds. From the point of view of the emancipation-seekers, therefore, Marx is the most profound philosopher and guide. In the specific context of Indian philosophy and class struggles the **Bhagavadgita** has been the most formidable weapon for the ruling classes and remains a significant document to be countered by Marxism whose polaric opposite the **Bhagavadgita** is.

Mystification and awe-inspiring pronouncements are the stock in trade of the philosophy of the oppressors and the **Bhagavadgita** abounds in such apparently invincible final truths. That irrelevancies hardly bother the hardcore votaries of idealism is amply illustrated by the method and design of the **Bhagavadgita**. A more pernicious text in the field of Indian philosophy is almost impossible to come by. Such is the character of this text in the range of Indian religion.

The most unalloyed idealistic merchandise is made to appear quite glittering and glamorous by the author of the **Gita** who is the most sophisticated janitor that the ruling classes have found among the intellectual justifiers of the horrors of oppression and crime. Milton wrote the epic **Paradise Lost** to justify the ways of god to man. The most powerful

shield that the ruling class has possessed in history is the mood of acceptance among the masses, for, if an idea that grips the minds of the masses is a material force, it does not really matter whether it is the idea of submission or revolt that so grips the minds; each will have its own hold on the minds and also act as the motivating force for further action or inaction, as the case may be. The clever rationaliser, that the author of the **Gita** is, induces inaction. Paradoxically enough, this message of inaction is couched in the language of dynamic action in the **Gita.** Even some scholars devoted to dialectical and historical materialism have averred at times that the impact of the **Gita** is fundamentally that the lethargic and astounded Arjuna was made a violent resister, and so on. But all this facile deduction may be tantalising as a rhapsody only for those who like to excel the falsifiers of philosophy by adding their own contribution to the act of falsification.

Take any ancient treatise and there is room for discussion from various angles mainly because different shades of opinion are usually reflected in these treatises. The Veda and Upanisads belong to this category. The Veda and Upanisads are not texts with a single track, and a blind track at that. Phases of the changing society are recognisable therein. The dialogues among the philosophers of the Upanisads are not the despair of a scientific socialist for the simple reason that those philosophers consciously admit the possibility of the materialist point of view as a basic for discussion. The Buddhist texts and texts of later philosophical schools, especially the latter, may take pains to discredit materialism, but they don't dismiss it offhandedly and abrasively. That is the extraordinary prerogative the **Gita** enjoys.

The author of the **Gita** is the official spokesman of the ruling class in the sphere of philosophy and it is his speciality that he gives fine finishing touches to a sordid philosophical junk. Take an average teacher of Indian philosophy in an Indian university of today. Chances are that he is blissfully

ignorant of the dichotomy between idealism and materialism in the stream of philosophical disquisition through the ages even in India. He is the 'justifier' & 'rationaliser' of the system for which idealism is the typical philosophy. An enlightened observes of our society today cannot miss what the professor of philosophy so schemingly misses. And that is why he is the official spokesman. To put it rather bluntly, a painstaking journalist is more relevant and useful than such an official spokesman. In the context of the professor of philosophy, namely the author of the **Gita**, it is necessary to look for the enlightened journalists of the period to which the **Gita** belongs so that the distortions and manipulations of the official spokesman may be recognised.

The Dharmasastrakaras are better and more honest chroniclers than the author of the **Gita** in so far as they present their crude formulae about social structure and social stratification without any inhibitions. They are mercenaries straight and simple. Their spots are thus easy to discover and guard against. But the polished tongue of the author of the **Gita** conceals the venomous trick that he is out to perform in favour of his masters. His armoury of wisecracks provides the smokescreen for the vicious role that he has chosen to play as the voice of the oppressing class. How else can we understand the **Gita's** enunciation of the caste system as divine ordinance, but based on '**guna**' and '**karma**', as opposed to the brazen-faced declaration of the Dharmasastrakaras that it is a division entirely based on the criterion of birth ? Practice is the litmus test for ascertaining the credibility of these differing claims of the **Gita** and the law-givers ; that the law-givers are nearer the truth is obvious. Still, the **Gita** speaks of the ennobling criterion and gives the padding of **svadharme nidhanam sreyah, etc.**

A close look at the first chapter of the **Gita** reveals to us that it is the best part of the **Gita** as that is the only scientific part of it. The forceful and inevitable questions that the

supposedly panic-stricken Arjuna raises are the questions of a responsible sociologist. The next seventeen chapters are the answers of a windbag in that nowhere do we find the least evidence that the author has any sensible answers to the fundamental questions raised in the first chapter. The questions are real and they cannot be ignored by the philosophers of the ruling class. His answer, however, is full of rationalisations and obscurantism. This can well be demonstrated :

Gita 1.28 tells us that Arjuna was overcome with feelings of concern for his fellowmen. He was frustrated with thoughts of destruction. It was ethical consciousness which pervaded the mind of Arjuna (1.36). There was, of course, also a sense of egoism, presumptuousness and arrogance in him when he, together with his preceptor, described himself as the illumined (1.39). But the main question was : **Svajanam hi katham hatva sukhinah syama madhava** ? (1.37). The philosopher's agony was that the well settled order of hierarchy was going to be disturbed. Varnasamkara is the menace that threatens him. But there is a mild joke here when the author of the **Gita** puts the question like one of the orthodox brahmins might put it today. **Utsadyante jatidharmah kuladharmasca sasvatah,** he says. If they are really 'sasvatah', then where is the fear of their collapsing in a war crisis ? The social catastrophe, with the old order displaced, is round the corner for the author and he must stall it. His next seventeen chapters are there to perform this feat.

How does the author achieve it ? His first appeal is to fame, dignity and prestige of Arjuna (BG. 2. 2-3). But Arjuna again comes up with the doubts of his success in war. Moreover, there are **pujarhah** among the opponents ; they are not just tribals like Hidimba ! But the climax of it is that the author creates the ideological framework for his class by first creating a halo round the head of the preceptor of Arjuna (2.7).

Look at the concrete questions of Arjuna and the abstract answers of his preceptor beginning with 2.11. The scientists of Los Alamos are put to shame by Krishna who non-chalantly speaks of the stupidity of those who grieve over the dead ! Immediately thereafter we have some inane declarations none of which are great discoveries made by Krishna for the first time (2.13 : **Dehino'smin yatha dehe kaumaram yauvanam jara,** etc). But the analogy is supposed to corroborate something said in 2.12 : **Na tvevaham jatu nasam na tvam neme janadhipah ; na caiva na bhavisyamah sarve vayamatah p a r a m.** Arjuna becomes gullible with these verbal gimmicks. If it is true that there is no existence **prima facie,** as Krishna wants to suggest and prove, then where is the need to fiight ? If there is no killer and killed, a fight is as meaninglesss as reluctance to fight. And yet Krishna is all the time proving to Arjuna that a fight is more natural and hesitation unnatural. If there is no killer and killed, it follows that there is no victor and vanquished. So, why indulge in the luxury of a fight ? And ultimately, when Krishna does induce Arjuna to fight, it is not a fiight against any known social evil, it is against one's fellow-beings. Giving some allegorical meaning to the **Gita** will not help us much in this regard because the basic question of philosophy tackled here does not vary. The attempt of the author is to confound those who seek right answers to social questions. Thus he starts off with a puzzling and mystifying **'Na jayate mriyate va kadachit**....' ; unfortunately, the question of Arjuna was not that at all. Where is Krishna's reply to the query of Arjuna : **Aho bata mahatpapam kartum vyavasita vayam; yadrajyasukhalobhena hantum svajanamudyatah** (1. 45) ? It is a sociological quandary to which a mystifying high philosophy dish is served by Krishna. The totally uncalled for jugglery of **nainam chindanti sastrani**...., is the awe-inspiring chain that the philosopher as the defender of the ruling class is presenting to the masses. If Arjuna averred that war is evil and thereby betrayed some sign of a civilized approach, Krishna the divine declared that it is muck and colossal ignorance to think so. Justification ? — **Acchedyoyam adahyoyam akledyoyam asas**

yoyam, etc. He reinforces this philosophical obscurantism with the legend that you must be a slave to your duty (2.31 : **Svadharmamapi caveksya na vikampitumarhasi ; dharmaddhi yuddhacchreyo' nyat ksatriyasya na vidyate**). It is almost like the dictum and the homily administered to the GI's by Nixon and Johnson during "the crusade against communism" in Vietnam. As if this were not enough, he makes Arjuna feel intimate with heaven also because '**sukhinah ksatriyah partha labhante yuddhamidrsam**' (2.32). What a shame really that there are crazy people who decry war as a scourge on mankind ! They must take their first lessons in morality and duty from Sri Krishna Bhagavan !

The foulness of the design of the author of the **Gita** is quite unmistakable. Look at 2.33 to 38. Arjuna dear, if you don't fight, your **dharma** and **kirti** will be gone. You are a **sambhavita** and that position will be lost. And dread it you must because it is worse than death. Those who look upon you as a man of greatness and integrity will look down upon you. They will make a scandal of it, etc. All Goebbelsian talk. Why should Krishna want Arjuna to worry about all these things if as he had said earlier the soul of man is **acchedya**, etc. ?

The voluble preceptor has held the mind of Arjuna captive with fine abstract mystifying words and concepts ; so much so, at the end of the preceptor's discourse in which there is not a word by way of a direct answer to the questions raised by the pupil, Arjuna asks the master to hold forth a little more about the character of the **sthitaprajna** instead of simply reiterating his earlier question by pointing out to the master that his question had not been answered at all. Self-abnegation is made the most virtuous value in the course of the next discourse on **sthitaprajna**. (It is not without reason then that the Gandhian hypocrites have found in this part of the **Gita** their gospel). Joy in **status quo**, helplessness, submission, illusory happiness, aversion for fulfilment and the like are

extolled in hyperbolic language. The result is that the enquirer's mind is stunted in its growth, its virility is gone, and it meekly surrenders to the 'great and the noble'. It is needless to say that all this is rich with the potential to check social change and class struggle. The best fortress for the ruling class is the inert mind of the oppressed people. The Gita has for its purpose the transformation of a questioning mind into a dead mind. And that is precisely the reason why the misleading importance of the **Gita** needs to be exposed fully in our fight against idealism. There is no text in the whole range of Indian Philosophy which is replete with naked idealism and obscurantism so grievously as the **Bhagavadgita**. It is no surprise, therefore, that it is extolled as the text **par excellence** by all the footmen of feudalism and the staunch brokers of capitalism.

—*Marxism and Indology*
K. P. Bagchi & Co.,
Calcutta, 1981

EMPTY AND BLACK BOXES EXPLORED

No price is too high to pay for emancipating ourselves from the clutches of a fatalistic philosophy which preaches the gospel of the world being ephemeral and man being totally helpless therein. The Baba and the Swami cults have together played havoc in our midst by putting the spirit of man in the golden chains of **karma** and **moksha**, one concrete and the other abstract. By consistently repudiating the efficacy of all human endeavour, our unrelenting champions of idealist philosophy have for long served as jaintors of the ruling class. They espouse the cause of the thinking mind to the exclusion and detriment of the working hand and thereby function as the official idealogues of an unjust order based on oppression and slavery. In the process, they provide the mask of mysterious transcendentalism for the cruelty and stupidity of our socio-economic and cultural organisation to hide.

Those, however, who redefine the philosophical task for themselves do often call the bluff and take recourse to a dispassionate analysis of our 'sacred lore', much to the horror and agony of the conventional scholars. Driven to the wall, these scholars then practise the conspiracy of silence and ignore all interpretations which seek "to demystify philosophy by converting theological questions into questions of this world". It remains to be seen whether Arun Shourie's pursuit* will meet with the same response from the conventional academic circles.

**Hinduism: Essence and Consequence (A Study of the Upanishads, the Brahma sutra-s and the Gita)*; Vikas Publishing House, New delhi, 1976; pp xii + 414, Rs. 125.

Starting with the basic assumption that the purposes and consequences of Hindu tradition are this-worldly, Shourie posits that "from the point of view of establishing hegemony—or from that of breaking out of it—the key elements of the world-view that need to be manipulated are three: man's view of nature, man's view of the social world.... and man's view of man himself" (p. 2). Drawing extensively from the Upanishadic texts which have traditionally been assigned the status of scriptural authority, the author brings out the Upanishadic view on all these and other connected questions. Taking stock of the vast gamut of philosophical literature in India, Shourie makes the questionable claim that "the existence of so many and such varied schools is an important fact in itself. It is a reflection, among other things, of the fact that for millenia our communities lived in relative isolation with only infrequent contacts with each other. While there are records of debates among the adherents of different schools and while the writings of a Ramanuja show an almost obsessive preoccupation with refuting the stand-point of a Shankara, all the schools have survived all the debates. Throughout the course of our history the philosophical tradition was not welded into one philosophy just as the life of different communities was not welded into one life" (p 4). This is being unduly generous in assessing the role of our early philosophers who were no less tendentious than their modern counterparts. The fact is that all the schools have **not** survived all the debates; nor were all the debates conducted in an atmosphere of philosophical tolerance, as Shourie also points out subsequently. Those schools of thought which were inconvenient for the orthodoxy and those which were the despair of the prominent spokesmen of the ruling class ideology by virtue of their valid social criticism were neatly distorted or violently suppressed. The **Lokayata** system was one which thus incurred the wrath of the philosophers and the law-givers (**Dharmasastrakara-s**) alike. Another materialist school, namely the **Samkhya**, was foisted with ideas innately extraneous to it. The heavy pressure exerted on the **Nyaya**

and **Vaiseshika** schools by the menacing law-givers made their epistemology and ontology an odd mixture of logically deduced and scripturally superimposed ideas. Those schools which did flourish are really a unified set, the difference among them being no more consequential than that between king log and king stork.

To understand why the ruling class philosophers developed an abominable distaste for materialism one has to come to grips first with the thoroughly irrelevant division of Indian philosophy into the **astika** and the **nastika** systems. They are not the theistic and the atheistic streams respectively. In fact, the division itself is based on anti-philosophical considerations, the principal bone of contention being the acceptance or otherwise of the eternal validity of the vedic lore. It is a-historical also because such an acceptance involves the belief that the vedic compendium is a homogeneous text of a particular epoch containing ideas which are not mutually contradictory. Further, this division has nothing whatsoever to do with the positions that different philosophers take on such questions as the nature of the world and man. A more meaningful division of philosophy on this score is the one along idealist and materialist lines. It is not as if the vedic tradition were bereft of the materialist outlook; but this was sought to be nullified by some rare pernicious intellectua and philosophical gimmicks. It is unfortunate that Arun Shourie does not bring this out in his copious study of the Upanishadic text.

The Upanishads are the author's basic "document for argument". They are traditionally considered to be 108 in number and chronologically they belong to different periods and regions. The primary question to answer, therefore, is regarding the authenticity of these several texts as the basic source material. The author avers that it is not desirable to view some of them as the major texts and to relegate the rest to a minor position, and so he chooses "to err on the side of

comprehensiveness" (p. 7). He justifies this stance by saying that omission to include all of them as equally authentic or inclusion of them all as authentic are both subject to criticism alike. But this amounts to paying a premium to orthodoxy quite unnecessarily, besides making the methodology questionable. The author, for example, draws up a list of contradictions in the vedic and upanishadic thought, as corroborated from the texts, in chapter 9 of his book. Considering the fact that these texts have a particular character and an evolution over a period of many centuries, the contradictions are only to be expected, as even Arun Shourie concedes (p 314ff), and yet he indiscriminately quotes from them as if they were all equally ancient and authentic. The Upanishadic texts belonging to a period later than the 10th century AD, for instance, are bound to have assimilated the Advaitic and Visishtadvaitic traditions. They cannot thus be equated with corresponding texts of, say, the pre-buddhist era. Shourie makes a crucial statement that the texts belonging to different periods reflect "what we know about the mode of production of the period over which the the texts were compiled" (p 314). But he nowhere elucidates what he posits by specifically analysing the vedic material as a pointer to a definite mode of production then prevailing. Do the later Upanishads exhibit traces of a mode of production different from that of an earlier period as reflected in the earlier texts ? The texts themselves do throw light on this question though Shourie shows no inclination to tackle the question seriously or in depth. On the other hand, he quotes substantially from **all** the texts of **all** the periods while discussing what in generic terms is called "Upanishadic thought". The contention of the author seems to be that by and large this discounting of chronological differences makes no difference for the principal argument about the misleading way in which the scriptural texts present Reality. A book that promises to be of some consequence outside academic circles—a crying need in the context of the blindfold faith in transcendental philosophy that has taken hold of the minds of the middle class in India—would,

however, have done well to deal with the historical stages that the several upanishadic texts represent and show how particular ideas gave a prop to the social organisation under different conditions of the production process through the ages. The "pure academic circles", if at all there be such in any sense, can now reject the book, for it is not their cup of tea, by pointing out the apparent flaw in the methodology of the author. But the success of the book consists in the fact that even they will have to sit up and organise defence on their side if they care to thumb through the book, a deed which will be a highly rewarding experience for them.

Giving a margin to the author's predilection for long quotations from upanishadic texts of all sorts, one might say that the outstanding feature of the book is that it is a fine documentation of upanishadic opinion on such matters as the undifferentiated, non-qualified nature of the **Brahman**, the identity of the **Atman** and **Brahman**, the illusory character of the observed world, the glory of **moksha** and the way to attaining that state of emancipation, and the status of man. Shourie rightly emphasises the point that the upanishads uniformly decry the body of man as something foul; when it is complimented, it is only for the sake of glorifying the **Jiva** that is in it (p 20). As Shourie puts it, "while the Upanishads 'exalt' the individual being by identifying him with the **Brahman**, it is a disembodied, indescribable being that they exalt; the empirical being of flesh and blood, of joys and sorrows is decried and reviled" (p 36). This whole approach, it must be noted, is idential with the injuction of Socrates that you must offer a cock to the god of healing at the time of death, for, death is deliverance while life is a burden. The body of man is a prison-house in any case, and therefore it is immaterial whether one is a slave or a slave-owner! Consequently, it is pointless for the slave to grudge his master. The immediate social implication of this 'profound' philosophy is that it disarms the slave and perpetuates slavery. A further irony is that the hallmark of the "undifferentiated, non-quali-

fied" **Brahman**, with whom the **Atman** is identical, varies depending on the caste of the person in whose body it resides, as the **Apashudradhikarana** (**Brahma Sutra-s** 1.3.34-38) labours to explain. **Brahma Sutra** 1.3.38 authoritatively declares that listening to and study of the scripture are prohibited for the **Shudra-s**, as enjoined by the law-givers also, and Shankara gleefully quotes a statement in his commentary on this **sutra** which purports to suggest that the **shudra** is like a cemetary and hence the scriptures are unavailable to him just as they can't be studied near a cemetary.

And all this in the background of the affirmation of the Upanishads about the "exclusive existence of **Brahman**" which is described as "the entity, the residual, that is left after all the phenomenal existence and all phenomenal entities have been denied" (p 46). A postulate like this should naturally make us wonder why ignorance (**avidya**), illusion (**m a y a**) and **Brahman** ought to be v i e w e d as real when the reality of all phenomenal entities is denied. But man **thinks** that the world is real and acts on that basis. Hence the endeavour of the Upanishads "to get a hold of one's mind" as "the first step in dispelling the delusion that holds us in thrall" (p 51). One cannot miss the stranglehold that is powerfully established on one's mind when the essence of the philosophical pronouncements of the Upanishads is grasped, and that, in the words of Arun Shourie, is that "**Brahman** is an undifferentiated, nonqualified, autonomous entity; this entity is pure consciousness; Man is not the body, senses or mind; he is the **Atman** and the **Atman** is **Brahman**; Reality is one; **Brahman** exists and he is undifferentiated pure consciousness; therefore, the manifold empirical world is an illusion" (p 53). On the socio-cultural plane the consequence of this essence is the millstone round the neck of man. Added to that is the primordial importance attached to faith and the demand for the suspension of reason, which objectively leads to fideism (pp 131 and 133). Basing himself on this data Shourie rightly concludes (p 156) t h a t our philosophers

teach us, as Marx and Engels would say, "the art of converting real objective chains that exist outside me into merely ideal, merely subjective chains, existing merely **in me** and thus of converting all external sensuously perceptible struggles into pure struggles of thought" ("The Holy Family", Progress Publishers, Moscow, pp 97, 226). The fundamental tenet of the Upanishads that all, including suffering, is unreal makes the task of **changing** society superfluous. It scores victory in favour of **status quoism** by a clever idealistic **interpr tation** of the world which may be accepted only at our own peril.

The **Bhagavadgita** carries forward the attack launched by the Upanishads, but it does so in a more sophisticated and intellectual fashion; so much so, it remains the most formidable weapon for the ruling classes. Mystification and awe-inspiring pronouncements are the stock in trade of the philosophy of the oppressors and the **Gita** abounds in such apparently invincible final truths. The most unalloyed idealistic merchandise is made to appear quite glittering and glamorous by the author of the **Gita.** A powerful shield that the ruling classes have possessed in history is the mood of acceptance among the masses, for, if an idea that grips the minds of the masses is a material force, it does not really matter whether it is the idea of submission or revolt that so grips the minds; each will have its own hold on the minds and also act as the motivating force for further action or inaction, as the case may be. As a rationaliser, the author of the **Gita** induces inaction though paradoxically enough the message is couched in the language of dynamic action. There is legitimate reason, therefore, for Shourie to decry the practice of some stalwart interpreters of the **Gita** to superimpose "modern" ideas on the text to serve our immediate needs, be it in the context of the institution of caste hierarchy or the concept of sacrifice. Some scholars have extolled the **Gita** by giving what meaning they want to the text in a henotheistic style ignoring the self-contradictory positions that this ensues.

The main thesis of the author that the Upanishads and the **Gita** do not expound any doctrine that would be conducive to the acceptance of any modicum of social responsibility (pp 210 222) is very valid. These texts have for their professed objective the enabling of man to transcend society and be a recluse in order to achieve unity with **Brahman**. This path, incidentally, is not paved with intellect, reason or scholarship. After all, the **Brahman** chooses the appropriate soul or souls for thus injecting wisdom, as the **Kathopanishad** (1.2.23) puts it. The modern traditionalists are perforce constrained to bypass certain inconvenient passages in the Upanishads, as for example **Chandogya Upanishad** 5.10.7, which among other things states that "those who are of stinking conduct here.... will enter a stinking womb, either the womb of a dog, or the womb of a swine, or the womb of an outcaste". The telling commentary of Arun Shourie on this is : "Even the **womb** of an outcaste stinks, does it ? It is the same, is it as the womb of a dog or a swine ? And all this from the mouth of **Brahman** Himself ? And yet we pride ourselves on our tolerance !" (p 298).

With scores of references on a number of issues discussed in the Upanishads Shourie makes their resistible observation that our great thinkers start with empty boxes and stuff them as they like (pp 301-2). They enter into controversies on pointless issues and thus resemble "those who maintain the Devil is green and those who insist he is yellow" (p 302). The social impact of that part of the Upanishads which is a sheer twaddle of speculation is that misery has multiplied for the masses (**ibid**).

The point is that these texts and their overenthusiastic exponents of contemporary times cling to a theory of knowledge that makes a mockery of knowledge. They do not admit that at a given stage of human history man's totality of knowledge of himself and of his surroundings is limited or incomplete. They are not prepared io suspend judgement on

questions like the evolution of life or even the evolution of the universe till such time as they gain enough data to come up with a formulation. The result is the mumbo-jumbo of the **lila** (sport) of **Brahman**, and **karma**, **triguna**, etc., of the **Atman**, the **Brahman** and the **Atman** being undifferentiated! Shourie exposes the hollowness of many a claim made in the Upanishads and their commentaries by the preceptors (**acharya-s**) which should make any conventional and orthodox exponent of Indian Philosophy to open his eyes and re-examine his positions in the specific context of the dynamic movements that society has witnessed through the ages.

Another revealing analysis of Shourie is that of the idea of tolerance which is usually dished out as the most glorious tradition in the sphere of Indian culture. As he succinctly puts it, "the society and the tradition were very tolerant in matters that did not affect the social order". In matters affecting the social fabric "the rules and the sanctions do not exemplify a tolerant society — rather they point to a society that is determined to make unthinking conformity the second nature of its members" (p 361). He adds that "this duality-of being tolerant in superficials and intolerant in matters that might call into question the basis of the social order — is reflected in the debates of the philosophers also" (**ibid**). One is inevitably reminded of the kind of tolerance that the so-called liberal democrat E M Forster advocates: tolerance in the queue for a bus, but abominable intolerance towards a system which seeks to be a substitute for the existing one of colonial plunder and economic and social inequalities. As long as one paid due ransom to the priestly class and accepted the norms of the hierarchical society, it did not matter whether one was a **mimamsaka** or a vedantin. The trouble arose only when the basic foundation of society was sought to be altered. The ramifications of caste society, the powerful and sordid theory of **karma**, and many other obscurantist claims, these were not allowed to be denigrated. The least resistance was met with furious codification, as indeed the early physi-

cians in India experienced. (See, Debiprasad Chattopadhyaya : "Science and Society in Ancient India", Calcutta, 1977.)

When thinking and action are thus curbed or made the prerogative of just one section of society, the ruling elite is quite safe in its saddle and can have the luxurious pretention of catholicity, tolerance and what not. When the seed of helplessness is made to germinate in a person's consciousness through the philosophical obscurantism of **karma**, **brahman**, **varna**, **yajna**, **maya**, **avidya**, etc., the police battalions required for quelling rebellion must needs be limited. That the priestly class prescribed the law for society by virtue of its position alongside the economically viable class gives the lie to the assertion about any alleged meaningful catholicity in the matter of religion and philosophy as having prevailed profusely in ancient India. Mystification consolidated the power and position of the priestly class. Modern mystification takes a different form ; it could be a **jana jagarana abhiyana** of the Viswa Hindu Parishad, the fundamentalism of Khomeini, the **diktat** of the Holy See, or the crazy call of Zionism and Racialism. The political aim of the priestly class was well defined by Kautilya in his **Arthasastra** even as the political aim of today finds expression through a crusader for 'freedom' called Ronald Reagan whose manifesto, as outlined before the Commons and Lords in London, is "to drive Marxism-Leninism to the ash heap of history". A section of the modern intelligentsia, with far greater influence than the priestly class of earlier times, sees in this brand of freedom its own security and prosperity. It will not hesitate to use the old armoury of the Upanishads, the **Gita** and the **Brahma Sutra-s** for securing its objectives, for the real content of these texts has not been fully presented to our people. Arun Shourie's work could well be regarded as an attempt in the direction of disabusing a few misconceptions in this regard, notwithstanding its limitations following from an inadequate methodology.

One last word and we close. And that is about the last chapter of the work which initiates discussion on Gandhi and the Tradition. What Arun Shourie is not prepared to forgive in the traditional interpreters of the scriptural texts like Shankara, Ramanuja, etc., he is prepared to give a wide margin to in the case of Gandhiji, as the latter conducted many important and far reaching struggles. It is a dubious point whether the views of Gandhiji on the scriptures must be viewed with sympathy only because he led struggles ; for, it could be argued with equal force that this preoccupation of Gandhiji blunted the edge of a few struggles launched and led by him, his own philosophical conventions having been behind his decisions quite frequently. This is not to minimise the pivotal role played by Gandhiji as the seminal character of our epochin bringing the masses to the path of struggle. What is suggested is that there is no evidence to hold the view that his struggles followed exclusively from his understanding of the scriptures and that, therefore, his interpretation of the scriptures may not necessarily be of practical utility in changing our socio-cultural order. It is pertinent to point out that a tinge of revivalism and obscurantism is unmistakably discernible in Gahdhiji's writings on Indian philosophy and religion **in spite of** his unquestionably remarkable stature otherwise.

Finally, the entire section on "Consequences" (Chapters 6-10 in the book), especially chapter 10 (Censequences–III · Cacophony, Repressive Tolerance and Fideism), deserves to be brought out as an independent monograph in order to reach more people in and outside the academic world so that a purposeful debate could be carried on. And avoidable mistakes, like writing **pramana** as **pramanda**, could be avoided when a second edition of the book is brought out, besides pruning the long quotations from the Upanishadic texts insofar as they do not add to the value of the book and the credibility of the arguments based on them.

—*Economic and Political Weekly*
July 31, 1982

SCIENCE AND ANCIENT INDIAN PHILOSOPHY

A basic understanding of the postulates of science is a prerequisite for any discussion of science in all its dimensions. These postulates are essentially three, namely, that the processes in nature follow a definite law; that they are knowable; and that knowledge enables us to intervene effectively in turning nature to our advantage. The second postulate here asserts that at any given stage of history there are several things unknown, but there is nothing unknowable. This does not mean that science has answered all our questions nor that it will answer such questions fully and perfectly at any time. It is true that the present day has found answers to many questions to which earlier generations did not have an answer, but while doing so newer questions have arisen in plenty. The answers that later generations may find for these questions will again give rise to still newer questions. Knowledge thus is conditioned by history and experience at any given time and hence it is never complete. It is only the prerogative of speculative philosophy to claim absolute knowledge and wisdom for itself. Scientific knowledge on the other hand is only progressive and cumulative. In other words, it is the child of time and experience and not of authority, as Bertolt Brecht put it. The pronouncements of science do not claim to be certain in an absolute sense as pointed out earlier, but only to be the most probable on present evidence. As for scientific knowledge following from authority, it may be well to recall Bertrand Russell's anecdote about the reaction of Todhunter, the mathematician, who is said to have objected to the establishment of laboratories in Cambridge. He thought that it was "unnecessary for students to observe experiments performed:

results could be vouched for by their teachers, all of them of the highest character, and many of them clergymen of the Church of England". There are presumably no Todhunters among serious scientists of today and one also surmises that authority even of a clergyman might have often been mistaken. It is conceded that scientific truth is not static and that it acquires wider and deeper meanings continually thus changing it or apparently contradicting it. New truth in the sphere of science contains and develops the old truth; it represents the next higher stage of the conquest of understanding.

Scientific theory has a dual aspect in that it organises existing knowledge and points the way to the acquisition of new knowledge while also being a statement about the nature of the universe in its manifold forms. It is only through analysis and understanding of a given organism that one obtains the ability to intervene effectively to suit one's advantage in the context of the forces of nature. Direct observation followed by a rational processing of the empirical data gives rise to a knowledge of the objective laws governing the organism concerned, be it nature or one's own body, with the help of which you can anticipate and direct. In that sense, science is "the cognition of necessity", as D.D. Kosambi puts it. From this follows the further dictum that "freedom is the appreciation of necessity", as Engels put it. The limitation of knowledge at the present juncture about, say, the earthquakes conditions the degree of man's freedom or the lack of it from the calamity ensuing from earthquakes. If it is not knowledge that is lacking, then the limitations of a system within which we operate may condition the freedom that knowledge might bestow on us. We may be aware of the panacea for disease, but the multinational drug companies might prevent the panacea from reaching those who need it, or, as during earlier ages the panacea might elude the patients because of the hierarchical divisions within society or because of the stranglehold of orthodox authority.

But the absence of scientific temper can block all avenues of obtaining relief from the available fountains of knowledge. It must, however, be stressed that scientific temper is not a typical phenomenon of post modern science. The attitude is much older as evidenced by efforts and findings of Democritus in ancient Greece or the Vaiseshika and Samkhya philosophers of ancient India, not to speak of the medical sciences of both ancient India and ancient Greece. Nachiketas of the **Katha Upanishad** fame had a doubting mind just as Svetaketu of the **Chandogya Upanishad** had. The way they resolve their doubts may be acceptable or otherwise to us, but their doubting abilities cannot themselves be doubted. Arjuna of the **Bhagavadgita** is a great doubter, too, especially as he has certain qualms about social upheavals likely to be caused by a devastating war. The Lokayata philosopher who questions the usefulness of the death rites **(shraaddha)** or the dip in the Ganges as emancipatory means cannot likewise be dismissed easily. If the libations offered to the dead in the death rites can really reach the dead, this philosopher queries, why is there any need to carry your food with you while on a sojourn? Somebody back home can as well offer periodic libations to reach and sustain the traveller. If a dip in the Ganges is a means to emancipation, this philosopher wonders whether the fish in the Ganges is not the most eligible candidate for obtaining the **Summum bonum** right away!

This brings us directly to the age old controversy regarding the mutual claims of science and superstition for acceptance. The doubting Thomases are more often than not put under the pressure of religion to the exclusion of what scientific investigation leads one to. It is perhaps realised by adherents of dogmatic religion that "science is too dangerous to be popularised without being sterilised by making it fit in with religion". It must at the same time be remembered that e a r l y philosophers "were by no means impelled, as they thought they were, solely

by the force of pure reason" (Engels). There were other conditions or even social compulsions dictating their particular affinities. The exponents of logic, or **hetushastra** as it was called in ancient India, for example, had to face the wrath of law-givers like Manu who insisted that "by **Shruti** (direct revelation) is meant the Veda, while the **Dharmashastra** (law codes) is to be viewed as **smriti** that is subservient to the Veda. These two should not be questioned at all as they are the source of all sacred law. If a **dvija** (twice-born: brahmin, etc.) relying on the science of reasoning (hetushastra) treats these two with contempt he must be excommunicated by the virtuous people" (11.10-11). The **Mahabharata** refers to a brahmin questioning the scriptures during his brahminhood as having taken birth as a low animal in a subsequent birth, all because of his scepticism. Much earlier, the **Katha Upanishad** had declared that wisdom is not to be gained through reasoning. The **Maitri Upanishad** of a somewhat later date went further and decried logicians as stark heretics with a tendency to go against scriptural authority. Not satisfied with this observation it roundly condemned them by asserting that "verily, these creatures are evidently robbers, unfit for heaven". There is thus nothing strange or novel about the contemporary orthodox gallants who see in scientific temper a haunting spectre.

Despite the stumbling blocks thus presented by orthodoxy in the path of logic, rational analysis and scientific investigation, however, a few schools of philosophy did emerge in ancient India underlining the efficacy of critical examination (**pariksha**) preceded by doubt (**samshaya**). The methodology of Nyaya philosophy is foremost among them. There is no legitimate philosophy in its reckoning if it does not follow from critical examination. The **Nyaya Sutra** of Gotama* has

---

*Translated by Mrinalkanthi Gangopadhyaya. —Pub. *Indian Studies*, 3, Sambunath Pandit Street, Calcutta-700 020 Introduction by Debiprasad Chattopadhyaya. (The present article is essentially a review of this book entitled NYAYA).

an elaborate discussion about doubt as the starting point of philosophical enquiry, which itself is the product of a contradiction existing between thesis and antithesis, the doubt being resolvable through critical examination alone. This enunciation is carried to its farthest limit when the text avers that "the Vedas are authoritative exactly in the sense in which Ayurveda or medical science is". And, Vatsyayana, the commentator on Gotama's treatise, humbly submits that the authors of the Veda were also human beings after all, not with standing their wisdom. Possibly, this irks Shankara mightily and hence he pontificates : "In matters to be known from scriptures, mere reasoning is not to be relied on.... As the thoughts of man are altogether unfettered, reasoning which disregards the holy texts and rests on individual opinion has no proper foundation" (On **Brahma Sutra**, 2.1.11). Note the gist of this master carefully; Thoughts are unfettered, but it is desirable to fetter them. These fetters should come from the scriptures and not from reasoning ! Would it be too impolite if one were to ask the master whether truths don't cease to be just individual opinions when once they are logically established ?

The power of reason did not yield to such homilies. Different schools of Indian philosophy, including the Nyaya, illustrate this point. The hard core of Nyaya is essentially an empirical epistemology, the like of which is almost unparalleled in Indian thought. This must be viewed strictly in the background of the historical possibilities of its period. It would be futile and unjust to expect a greater rigour in its methodology than the period could allow, Yet, Vatsyayana unambiguously opines that right knowledge is always of a real thing and not of an ephemeral object. And the only way by which the truth of a real thing can be ascertained is through practice. The water in a pool obviously exists really when it is demonstrated by practice that you can actually drink it and quench your thirst. The water seen in the mirage does not stand this test and hence is unreal and

its knowledge is accordingly fallacious. This has further implications as well insofar as it amounts to a rejection of the idealist theory of two truths, the pragmatic and the transcendental, which is so pivotal for the monists who consider the observed world as illusory, the absolute alone being real from the transcendental point of view. Experience in the view of Nyaya philosophy is invariably of real objects, a standpoint which some contemporary "scientific scientists" also are unprepared at times to subscribe to. As Vatsyayana puts it, "successful activity results when the object of knowledge is known by an instrument of valid knowledge. Hence the instrument of valid knowledge is invariably connected with the object".

Diametrically opposed to this position is the one which scoffs at the pursuit of the direct knowledge of nature as represented by one stream of thought in the Upanishads where the omnipotence of thought is emphasised as against the search of truth through the collection of empirical data and its analysis. Knowledge there is no longer the knowledge of the object ; it is the knowledge of the subject itself, of the bare ego or the pure self. A lofty contempt for nature or the material world is only a sequel to this. Thoughts alone remain there, the things thought of having faded out. The cult of pure reason, if it may be so called, takes the place of rational analysis. But this is only one stream in the upanishadic thought, the stream of idealism, which posits that the idea alone is real. The other stream, that of the "heretics", is fortunately not unrepresented in the Upanishads themselves. The inheritors of this legacy are the ancient Indian Philosophers of the Lokayata, Nyaya and early Samkhya school of thought, besides astronomers like Varahamihira and Brahmagupta and physicians and surgeons like Caraka and Sushruta. In the face of stout opposition from the orthodoxy they explode quite unhesitatingly a number of myths cherished and propagated by the idealist votaries and their patrons, the vested interests. The explanations given by the two astronomers

noted above about the eclipses illustrates this aspect eminently. Formally they acknowledge the mythical accounts of the events of eclipses while materially rejecting them. The formality is observed merely to placate the orthodox opinion which acted as a constraint on their open discussion of the findings of their investigations and theoretical studies. Al Biruni took note of this seemingly contradictory exposition of the event of eclipses by these astronomers many centuries ago and fairly understood the dichotomy they faced.

The hurdles they had to clear were placed by the opponents of science consciousness with the well placed apprehension that this science consciousness inevitably leads to the acceptance of the materialist outlook as its theoretical basis. Of course, one need not be in jitters while evaluating this none too harmful formulation, for, put in very simple terms, the materialist outlook merely demands the recognition of the fact that objective reality is independent of our consciousness, a basic statement not frowned upon by any genuine scientist. It is very nearly universally acknowledged that "matter in all its five forms goes to the making of everything in nature." The terminology employed in Indian philosophy is by and large the prototype of the current scientific terminology in this regard. The idea is put forcefully thus by the **Sushruta Samhita :** "It is claimed that the knowledge of matter in its different forms is alone relevant for medicine, because in the therapeutic context it is impermissible to conceive of anything transcending matter." It is not a long step that one has to take after admitting this to give the further formulation that "the understanding of certain substances as heavy and of others as light must be considered as being determined by nothing but their inherent nature or **Svabhava**" (**Sushruta Samhita :** 1.46.448). The term **svabhava** only signifies the law of nature as it is called in the sphere of science. The next natural step is the admission of the causal principle as a fundamental ingredient in science, but for which no science, including medical science, can take any stride. The causal principle cannot be established excep-

ting through direct observation, a crucial factor in empirical studies. It is this emphasis on direct observation that disturbs the hornet's nest according to the orthodoxy because it leaves no scope for their advocacy for the implicit faith in the scriptures and their own authority following therefrom. Knowledge thus gained is not a mere matter for meditation even for the ancient Indian scientist; it is a practical matter which acts as a guide to further action. It leads him on to a view of man and nature directly relevant for practice. That is how, to quote Dr. Debiprasad Chattopadhyaya, "in ancient India, the only discipline that promises to be fully secular and contains clear potential of the modern understanding of natural science is medicine."

It is curious to note that this medical science develops a philosophy that is relevant to its science and in the process turns the tables against the idealist philosophers by rejecting their world view almost completely. The fabric of society as envisaged by the latter is also called into question and this is the worst sacrilege in the defenders of the hierarchical system in society. Knowledge from the scientist's point of view is veritable power and such knowledge is never accidental or coincidental. As the **Caraka Samhita** puts it, "any success attained without reasoning is as good as sheer accidental success". This has the potential to shatter all the pet philosophical theories of the idealist philosopher who has his firm footing in the rejection of nature as an independent entity, let alone understanding it and manipulating it for the furtherance of one's "mundane interests". With his philosophical theory to back him up, the physician, nay, any scientist, will even deny the efficacy of a supernatural power as the ordainer of destinies of men. The theory of karma is cast away unceremoniously, the caste division of society is bumped off, the divine right of the priestly class is pooh-poohed, secrecy of knowledge is given a go by, and then what remains for the orthodoxy to fall back upon to conserve its position?

In short, logic and epistemology have such a full sway that the old order cannot sustain itself on their basis. That explains the inordinately deep hostility of the law-givers towards the medical men and other scientists of their kind.

That was precisely the reason why Kanada, author of the **Vaiseshika Sutras**, had to find devious methods to hoodwink the bigots by occasionally glorifying the priests and their privileges while discussing the categories **(Padartha-s)** which according to him pervasively cover all that is knowable and nameable in the world. The assumed respect for vedic authority in his system as in that of Gotama is nothing if it is not a subterfuge to gaining respectability at the hands of the orthodoxy. They find this to be the least harmful among the tactics for evading an inquisitorial injunction from the law–givers and the saviours of vedic authority while propagating their own philosophical theories. Nevertheless the fact ramains that Gotama's epoch–making contribution to Indian philosophy is the inexorable importance of logic as a means of valid knowle–dge. For him logic is that by which "we can overcome the limitation of our sensuous apprehension and discover truths we cannot directly perceive". Like the **bhutavada** of the Lokayata and **Pradhanavada** of the Samkhya, the **Paramanuvada** of the Vaiseshika works out "an explanation of the objective world in terms of its theory of the nature of matter." All three are one in totally refuting the contention of the idealists that the external world does not have a reality of its own. They realise quite clearly that positing the unreality of the existing world is the surest way of curbing the growth of science and its endeavours to understand the world, which incidentally include man and his society. Not to be outdone by these three schools of philosophy, Kumarila, foremost among the exponents of the **Purvamimamsa** system, also calls the bluff of those who deny the reality of the world. If anything, he is more scathing in his remarks when he characte-rises this stance as a pedantic pretence and a hoax on the

people to prevent them from seeing "the raw absurdities of the world denying outlook". The **Lokayata**–s go to the extent of affirming that what the others consider to be the soul is but a very special kind of organisation of matter resulting in the human body for which reason they are dubbed and derided as the **dehatmavadin**–s. That matter absorbed in the body in the form of food, etc., goes to the making of consciousness is an idea which is as old as the Upanishads as evidenced by the **Chandogya** where Uddalaka Aruni even insists on an experimental demonstration of it to prove his point. Much the same view is held by the Samkhya and Vaiseshika systems as well in their original forms. Jayanta Bhatta, a late Nyaya–Vaiseshika exponent, has this to say on the issue of consciousness as an evolute of matter : "The Lokayatikas who deny the other world argue that there exists no soul apart from the body in which consciousness is found embedded.... Because of some peculiar transformation, the material elements themselves acquire a great deal of power or potency and as such become endowed with consciousness, *i.e.*, knowledge or consciousness originates only in them. Just as molasses, rice, etc., though formerly devoid of intoxicating power acquire intoxicating power when transformed into alcoholic drink, so also the material elements, though without consciousness in their former state of earth, etc., acquire consciousness when transformed into the body." (As quoted by Debiprasad Chattopadhyaya in his **What is Living and What is Dead in Indian Philosophy,** 1976, p. 431). The rich possibilities for further scientific advancement that this naturalistic view holds forth cannot be gainsaid. Epistemology and ontology based on such understanding and analysis bring us to the very threshold of a genuine scientific method which can be ignored only by those who see in the contrary view a defensive armoury against social change that such a view adumbrates within itself. Their theories may not work out the laws of social transformation in all its details , but it cannot be denied that their philosophical position contains in an embryonic form the possibility of working it out. And hence the attempt of the idealists to

demolish their theories by questioning the very verity of the postulates of science and the scientific method demanded by those postulates. All this is so precariously close to the postulates of modern science and its method that the orthodoxy of today, which unfortunately can count a few practitioners of science also in its fold, continues to launch tirades against it if it does not also distort it. Little doest his orthodoxy seem to understand that tirades may serve a purpose at times but that tirades could hardly be a substitute for indefatigable logic and scientific methodology. Time, reality, and experience are ranged against orthodoxy of both the old and the new brands. Deluding themselves into thinking that they and their dogma against science will last out can only add to their hopelessly incurable despair.

—*Deccan Herald*
Jan. 25, 1983

THE ASSAULT ON SCIENCE IN ANCIENT INDIA

At a time when the anti-science bias in our country seems to be on the rampage even at the highest levels of government, it is highly refreshing to turn our attention towards ancient India where the scientists fought a grim and relentless battle in their own way to assert the simple truth that "knowledge is the child of time and experience and not of authority" (Bertolt Brecht). This particularly so is the case of ancient-Indian medicine which scoffed at wild speculation and un substantiated conclusions and advocated and practised a rational foolproof method for evaluating any claim concerning medicine. This could well be illustrated.

One of the foremost texts embodying the results of centuries of patient observation and deduction from the point of view of the art of healing in ancient India is the **Caraka samhita**. In no uncertain terms does this treatise stipulate that a discussion in the sphere of medical science should strictly be limited by factors relevant to that discipline and not be clouded or marred by extrinsic or irrelevant factors, no matter how powerful or fascinating the source of that factor be. You cannot clinch the issue either way in medicine by taking recourse to overpowering or mystifying quotations from some authority held in reverence for one reason or other. In other words, the norms of ritualistic and religious practice or of metaphysics cannot be blindly applied in matters of medical science. This position helped in raising science at once to the heights of rationalism in ancient India.

Debiprasad Chattopadhyaya in his book **Science and Society**

in Ancient India* highlights the most interesting facts concerning the growth of medical science in ancient India and also dispassionately analyses the vicissitudes faced by the exponents of this branch of knowledge, especially from the rigid and unrelenting orthodoxy. The present work is in many ways a sequel to his previously book entitled **What is Living and What is Dead in Indian Philosophy** and thus may be said to carry forward the argument set forth there. If he has chosen the field of medicine to present the picture of activity and obstruction in the field of science in ancient India, it is because "the only discipline that promises to be fully secular and contains clear potentials of the modern understanding of natural science is medicine" (p 3). The attack which medical science had to face was in fact directed against every science which had no direct bearing on the brahminical rituals of the time. Most often, the rigours of such a process resulted in the compromise which science made with its virulent and diehard opponents. Long before medieval Europe presented this dilemma to the Galileos and the Descartes, ancient Indian legal authorities forced the issue on their contemporary physicians. The happy part of the story is that by and large the physicians acquitted themselves creditably and sometimes even nobly. It is to their credit that they successfully broke the barriers of the obnoxious but unquestioned institution of caste division in society and reached the lowly and the meek with whatever succour they could provide. This was no mean achievement considering the fact that the votaries of the vested interests, namely the authors of the codes of social conduct, or the **dharmasastrakaras** as they are called, were always prepared to go to any extent to support and stabilise the system of social (and economic) discrimination, of which they were the beneficiaries. Their ruthlessness and anger could easily be gauged if it is remembered that as early as during the age of the **Yajurveda**, the divine healers, namely the **Asvins**, were ostracised from the company of the gods for no other

---

*Research India Publications, Calcutta 1977, pp 441, Rs. 65.

reason than that they polluted themselves by practising medicine. The **Asvins** are celebrated as the most truthful and the wondrous in the **Rigveda**. They are physicians **par excellence** with a number of medical feats to their credit. But these very gods came to be censured in the **Yajurveda**, which set the tone for the hideous chorus of subsequent periods. Heaps of ridicule were poured on these gods in later literature including the **Mahabharata**.

THE ROLE OF THE PRIESTLY CLASS

It is to be realised that hierarchical aspirations alone are responsible for this denigration of the **Asvins** in the post-Rigvedic period, and that by implication it amounts to the denigration of the physician. This cannot be properly understood without first assessing the powerful hold that the legal codes enjoyed during the post-Upanishadic period. The priestly class which had stretched rituals to extraordinarily ridiculous limits happened to be the maker of these legal codes and as ordainers of the law, the chief lawmakers belonging to this class became ardent champions of an order of society in which their leisure and dividends were both protected along with the interests of the ruling class. Less said the better about the ethical norms of this class. Suffice it to note that a very early ritualistic text, namely the **Aitareya Brahmana**, suggests that a priest may ruin the sacrificer by effecting a change in the manner of the performance of a ceremony and by not uttering the **mantras** meant to be uttered. With such threats held out by the priestly class, it is easy to surmise that it almost enjoyed inquisitorial powers. The unfortunate physicians of ancient India attracted the attention of these lawmakers at a time when they were developing the science of medicine. But let us return to our original question as to why the physicians were specially chosen for derision and contempt by the lawgivers.

MEDICINE AND MATERIALIST PHILOSOPHY

A genuine and honest physician is bound to be catholic

and thus in practice an opponent of caste-divided society. For him, the man with disease is the subject for treatment; obviously, he cuts across caste barriers, much to the annoyance of the lawgivers who are champions of the social pyramid with themselves at the top. As if this were not enough, the creed of the physicians calls into question the belief in the law of **karma** also. For justifying the hierarchical society, the priestly class has always employed this law as its weapon. The science of medicine scoffs at such fantastic follies and substitues in its place, a theory based on the knowledge of the objective laws of nature. This very clearly has a precarious nearness to the doctrine of materialist philosophy. Hence, not to take up cudgels against the physicians under the circumstances would be simply suicidal. The persecution of physicians and other scientists in ancient India, therefore, is not something strange; it is a necessity for the leisured classes belonging to the top echelons of society.

The scientists were, however, not prepared to give in. Their faith in science taught them a few devious methods to hoodwink the orthodox priestly class and thereby preserve their scientific tradition. This they did by paying ransom to the priestly class in the form of rank concessions. With tongue in cheek, the scientists eagerly professed certain doctrines which might be expected to placate the dogmatic law givers. it is like Descartes making a pilgrimage of gratitude to the shrine of the Virgin of Loreto for his scientific discovery (p 393); but certainly it distorts the scientific treatises. Not only the extant texts of **Ayurveda**, but even such works like Brahmagupta's treatise on astronomy, are tainted and marred by these extraneous demands made on the authors. This aspect has never before been analysed objectively in the course of the study of the texts and it is thanks to Debiprasad Chattopadhyaya that the rigours faced by ancient Indian scientists can now be better understood by us.

It may not be out of place here to make a brief survey

of the methods, doctrines, and practice of medical science in ancient India. Chattopadhyaya has elaborated this in the first chapter of the book under the heading "science", while in the second chapter he has analysed the obstructions faced by science because of the "counter-ideology" spearheaded by the lawgivers. The third and last chapter provides an eminent critical analysis of the crucial source-book in Indian medicine namely the **Caraka Samhita**. The remarkable thing about the methodology adopted by the ancient Indian physicians is that "discarding scripture orientation, they insist on the supreme importance of direct observation of natural phenomena and on the technique of rational processing of the empirical data. They go even to the extent of claiming that the truth of any conclusion thus arrived at is to be tested ultimately by the criterion of practice" (p 7).

The perceptive physician learns through observation and experience, and for him "the entire world is the teacher, as it is the foe of the fool" as the **Caraka Samhita** puts it (p 63). Those who hope to keep the body of man in a fit condition naturally believe that "without the knowledge of nature, the knowledge of man remains incomplete" (p 54). Nature amply testifies to these physicians the fact that "everything in nature occurs according to some immutable laws, the body of which is usually called **svabhava** in Indian thought" (p 64). Unmoved by the awe-inspiring declamations of the stout metaphysicians, our ancient physicians coolly proceed with the assumption that "everything (in the discipline of medicine) is viewed as made of matter in five forms"; in other words, "from the medical viewpoint there can be nothing which is not made of matter" (p 66). Indirectly it is even admitted by them that consciousness is the product of matter when they say that "a substance is called conscious when it is endowed with the sense-organs" (p 72) and that the sense-organs are only the products of matter.

Grounded in near materialism as they are, they conceive

knowledge, including the knowledge of medicine, as something progressive and cumulative. Empiricism is their forte and that leads them to ever new questions concerning the nature of matter and the efficacy of certain forms of matter as drugs. They have no illusion that they have ultimate solutions to the questions but the urge to move on is irresistible in their case. Accordingly, the postulates of ancient Indian medicine are that the processes in nature follow some definite law, that these are knowable even if they are not already known, and that the knowledge of these laws gives man a certain power over nature (p 183). Bacon envisaged an age of science in which knowledge would be power; our ancient physicians committed themselves fully to that belief. As Chattopadhyaya puts it: "If anywhere in ancient Indian thought we are permitted to see the real anticipation of the view that knowledge is power—which, when further worked out, assumes the formulation that freedom is the recognition of necessity—it is to be found among the practitioners of the healing art" (p 180).

There is no room for doubt regarding the exact position taken by the ancient practitioners of medicine, although the extant texts incorporate several homilies which the exponents of the counter-ideology (that is, the anti-science stance) mouth rather loudly and forcefully. For instance, in the **Caraka Samhita** is recorded an emphatic view on the question: what brings about cure? The intrinsic efficacy of the drug administered to the patient or the "unseen hangovers of actions performed in past lives" (**adrishta**, as it is called)? The text says that "the action of a substance is determined exclusively by the substance itself and it is not influenced by anything else" (**Karma na anyat apekshate**) (p 154). The emphasis would be uncalled for if the text was not controverting some other widely held view regarding the issue and that view could only be in favour of supernatural causation. It is very clear that the empirical and the rational are defended in no uncertain

terms. But because of the necessity to placate the inquisitorial supernaturalists, the texts often "accept the view of **svabhava** along with certain other views that go flatly against it, like accidentalism" (p 179). The repeated stress on the importance of the knowledge of the law of causation leaves us in no doubt that the ancient physicians were quite severe in their demands on the scientists' methodology and practice. The **Caraka Samhita** unequivocally declares that chance successes do not enhance the prestige of medicine when it says that any success attained without reasoning is as good as sheer accidental success" (**vina tarkena ya siddhih yadriccha siddhireva sa**) (p 201).

THE PHYSICIAN IN THE CASTE STRUCTURE

The adepts in methodology that ancient India produced among the physicians were not also oblivious of the great call of humanism. Their vocation, they knew, offered the best solace and comfort to the ailing and the needy. Hoarding knowledge was not their speciality as it was of the spiritualists. Yaska in his **Nirukta** mentions that knowledge approached the brahmin and asked him to conceal it because it was his protector (**vidya ha vai brahmanamajagama gopaya mam shevadhishte' hamasmi**). This attitude would be totally alien to the ancient Indian physicians who were dedicated to bringing succour to all, irrespective of caste distinctions. The priestly class could not put up with this broad-mindedness, perhaps. Moreover, it found no nobility in work, as all work was the special duty of the downgraded people. After all, did not Herodotus also observe that "the noble are those who have escaped the yoke of manual labour"? (p 110). In any case, no brahmin could be allowed to stoop to such a mean level as to become a physician. The **Upanishads** which claim to teach "higher knowledge" (**para vidya**) as opposed to "lower knowledge" (or mundane knowledge ; **apara vidya**) do not so much as condescend to mention even one physician ; so contemptible are the physicians. The lawgivers, acting as the ideologues of the ruling class, stipulate that the practice of

medicine must be restricted to the "baseborn". Manu is absolutely emphatic about it. No less emphatic is another lawgiver, Vasishtha, who among other things says that he who makes his living by the practice of medicine cannot be called a brahmin (p 216).

Despite such serious hurdles, medical science in ancient India flourished and progressed to a considerable degree, thanks to the fusion of theory and practice in which the physicians ardently believed. A genuine tradition of science was thus fostered. So much so, "the achievements of ancient Indian medicine....give us the feeling of being at the threshold of modern science as it were" (p 269).

Among the other relevant and connected issues discussed by Chattopadhyaya may be mentioned the question of science and philosophy in the Greek and Indian contexts, the over-powering influence of metaphysics in undermining science during the Upanishadic age, the transition from magico-religious therapeutics of the **Atharva veda** to rational therapeu-tics characteristic of the later medical science and the science of medicine in Buddhist India. The enormous data collected and analysed on these topics by the author is again an eye-opener and as usual he handles the data most meticulously. There are a few pet myths concerning ancient Indian life that stand exploded in the course of Chattopadhyaya's vivisection of the medical literature of the past; but that is only incidental. Thus, for instance, he shows how notwithstanding the alleged reverence for the cow, the physicians prescribed beef as a nutrient. In fact, they even advocated the adoption of devious methods to administer certain kinds of food to the patients by passing them off as something else. Accordingly, for a physician it is not any gross transgression of traditional morality to give beef in the name of deer's flesh or fried worms in the name of intestines of fish to the patient so long as he is satisfied that the patient needs it. That is medical ethics stealing a march over traditional morality.

In the penultimate section of the book an attempt is made to identify a certain Bharadwaja, a heretic who is sought to be converted, in the **Caraka Samhitha.** The critical correlation of varied factors employed by the author in this section is undoubtedly commendable although I have a feeling that this is the only section in the whole book which may not carry full conviction with many readers. It is immaterial who Bharadwaja was so long as it is appreciated that a popular opinion contrary to the orthodox and idealist viewpoint of the metaphysicians and lawgivers prevailed extensively and that this opinion was a force to be reckoned with.

Abundant fresh ground has been broken by this book, especially with regard to medical science. Similar studies about the evolution of other sciences in ancient India, the levels to which they rose and the methodology developed by them are a crying need today. It is hoped that the author of **Science and Society in Ancient India** will bring out companion volumes to cover a few other major sciences developed in ancient India so that the prevailing fantasies concerning them may be substituted by rationally assessed facts. Indologists and social scientists can help us also in understanding the ramifications which might have stunted the growth of these other sciences after tracing the direction that they had taken during the initial phases.

—Social Scientist
No. 71

INDIAN SCIENCE AND REVIVALISM

While laying the foundation-stone for a planetarium in Bangalore recently the President of India explained how the Vedic lore is replete with astronomical knowledge. He almost felt that the Vedic people seemed to know more astronomy than we do.

Shortly after the president's revelation about Vedic astronomy cane Maj. Ahluwalia's analysis about the three-stage formation of the Himalayas. Giving the highlights of the book on his Himalayan adventures, a news agency underlined the rare eminence of this army officer who had discovered that Kalidasa was aware of the geological history of the Himalayas. The proof of this was traced to a particular stanza in the poet's **Kumarasambhava**.

Such reasearch feats are registered by our intellectuals quite freely and frequently. A legislator in the Karnataka Assembly made an observation during the debate on the motion of thanks to the Governor in February 1982 according to which one has to go to Germany if one wants to obtain a Ph.D. on the **Atharvaveda**. Obviously, to him the **Atharvaveda** is the most mysterious ancient text by taking which away from India the Germans fabricated aircraft, while we remain backward as we don't understand our texts.

How many times has not Swami Chinmayananda declared rhetorically in his expositions of the **Gita** that Einstein's theory of relativity is nothing new because our ancient metaphysicians had posited it even more elaborately ? No matter whether it is quantum mechanics or qualitative analysis, you have it in

our ancient sanskrit texts, especially the Vedas. There is precious little that you can discover anew in the world of knowledge. This is the kind of chorus which we hear quite frequently.

If such opinions had been expressed merely by the laymen, there might have been no occasion for any alarm. But knowledgeable scientists, too, come up with such formulations, thereby demonstrating that they prefer to be greater saintists than scientists. Years ago a certain Mr. Curtis wrote a letter to Bertrand Russell saying that the more he read the scriptures, the more convinced he became that the fund of modern knowledge was all to be found in these ancient texts.

The following characteristic reply of Russell is well worth our attention : "I am afraid that I do not agree that contemporary events bear out scriptural prophecy except in the sense that virtually anything can be so considered if the inclination to do so exists. My own preference is to look upon theological writings as the slightly historical fantasy world of primitive tribesmen, often savage and sometimes of interest (**Dear Russell**, Allen and Unwin, P. 49).

Those of our scholars who fail to recognise the value of our ancient texts other than by imposing modern knowledge on them are doing a disservice both to the texts and to science: to the texts because they fail to estimate the actual worth of these texts as the chief sources for our understanding of ancient society, and to science because they ignore the nature of science and its history. It is puerile to fear that the **Veda** might lose its value if some modern knowledge is not found therein.

For a keen student, the **Veda** is a storehouse of inexhaustible rich material about the evolution of our society. One does not have to mutilate it by superimposing either modern knowledge or transcendental wisdom on it. Secondly, how

does knowledge grow or what is the nature of science? To put it in the simplest of terms, knowledge is cumulative and progressive. If we can see farther than our ancestors did, it is because we are standing on their shoulders. If mankind does not commit the folly of committing collective suicide through the employment of the nuclear arsenal, the horizons of knowledge may be expected to be extended still further in the ages to come.

There are quite a few questions about man, nature, and the universe that the present generation is capable of answering, many of them unanswered before : and yet there are several questions that even the present generation is unable to answer. The succeeding generations may answer many of them and in the process raise further questions which will remain to be answered by their successors. For, the fundamental postulate of science is that there are several things unknown, but nothing unknowable.

What is unknown today is not something which can or will never be known. History sets a limit to the amount of knowledge that each given epoch knows and each epoch reduces the area of the unknown to the extent that is within its reach. To read the knowledge of a subsequent period into the treatises of an earlier period is, therefore, illogical and unnecessary. It is interesting in this connection to note that elements of modern knowledge are "discovered" in ancient texts by our profound researchers only **after** such elements have been added to the gamut of knowledge through other means and in other areas.

To wit, why did not our analysis of the ancient texts expound the theory of relativity, say, during the 19th century itself through an analysis of the texts, albeit in a slightly different form than the one in which Einstein expounded it during the 20th century? Why did they have to wait till theoretical physicist enunciated it through their studies during the

present century ? It is obvious that it is a clear case of misplaced enthusiasm and dogged romanticism. And it is achieved at the cost of the genuine scientific method.

The fact of the matter is that there has been no epoch in man's history when he made no attempts to come to grips with his surroundings.It is an inherent quality of man to enquire into the nature of things. He does it perforce when his survival itself depends on his a b i l i t y to understand the law of the phenomena that he witnesses around himself. It is within man's experience that the level of his sustenance is directly related to the power that he obtains to intervene in the happenings in nature through an understanding of its laws.

Naturally, man's grappling with nature provides him with ever new problems for investigation, each of which when solved teaches him also the application value of that new knowledge. It is thus foolhardy to imagine that science is something absolutely new and modern. Science is coeval with man's confrontation and co-operation with nature. What is new in science at each successive epoch is its method and the application of knowledge accruing to man from generation to generation.

A crude dabbling with the phenomena of nature in the initial stages of primitive society places man at the food-gathering stage. Gradually he becomes a hunter, an agriculturist, a metallurgist, a meteorologist, a phycician, a surgeon, a technician and so on. At no stage is the unfoldment of his potentialities total and perfect. That, incidentally, is also why his knowledge at any given stage in history is neither total nor perfect ; it is always a continuing process.

As time passes, this crude observer of himself and his surroundings takes to early magic as a possible means of imposing his will on the as yet un understood and therefore uncontrollable and unpredictable world of nature. Long after

that, he follows the empirical method for increasing his knowledge before getting down to the theoretical experimental method, the method now generally accepted as characteristic of science.

The post-modern phase in the method of science might be one of consultation with and guidance from the computer brains and the robot mechanics. This does not mean that science has developed its methods only in its current phase; it has had varying methods earlier,. too. And ancient science might have differed from its modern counterpart only with respect to the methods.

But the credibility of ancient science is not lost simply because its methods are different from the ones adopted by modern science. Science of any given epoch develops its own ethos and method; they may be considered outdated in subsequent periods, but not irrelevant. To assess the claims of ancient science with objectivity and not with any romantic fervour is thus a highly desirable thing.

It is only to be expected that ancient India, too, should have evolved a scientific method and apparatus to grapple with nature and enhance the degree of its freedom with the knowledge thus gained in its struggle with nature. Nobody can undermine the importance of the systematic work done in this direction by the ancient Indian scientists whose quest was sincere and whose limitations they recognised ungrudgingly.

What, however, is unfortunate is that some present-day enthusiasts of ancient Indian science ignore these limitations which our e arly scientists themselves recognised and acknowledged. Our current enthusiasts seem to believe that science had been developed fully and perfectly by our ancient seers and they go a step further even and declare that science was developed intuitively by our ancients and not so much on the basis of observation and analysis. They unhesitatingly

advocate the view that a nearly complete mastery had been established on nature by these intuitive ancient scientists.

The extremes to which the misplaced enthusiasm could go is best illustrated by an amusing interpretation of a passage in the **Rigveda** where the words "Vrishabho roraviti" occur. An enterprising scholar took this as scientific proof for the existence of tractors in the Vedic period. The onomatopoeic "roraviti", according to him, would be appropriate only in the context of a tractor metaphorically referred to as a "vrishabha" by the highly imaginative Vedic poet.

This kind of adulation of the past leads us nowhere. It is a sure indication of an attitude which sacrifices science at the altar of romantic eulogy. This is a none too worthy pursuit of those sections of our contemporary society which hope to perpetuate the value system and the hierarchical social gradation of the past by justifying them indirectly. Their "respect" for ancient Indian science stems from the fact that they are defenders of the **status quo**, or even retrogression. If they can convince us that ancient India had evolved science to a perfect degree, then it will not be long before they come up with the next basic assertion that those who had developed science thus must needs have also designed a social system along right lines. So accept both !

This is no slander on ancient Indian scientists themselves ; it is only an indictment of the contemporary impostors of ancient Indian science, the revivalists, whose interests lie elsewhere than in genuine science. The meticulous care with which the scientific temper and method were fostered by our early contributors to science can be partly understood if one is conscious of the struggle they had to wage to carry on with their scientific work in the face of almost insurmountable hurdles that the vested interests placed on their path.

The case of the medical practitioners illustrates this point

amply. They were treated as outcastes by the orthodox law-givers as they, more than any other section of society, broke the barriers of the strictest caste stratification of society. Are our revivalists prepared to appreciate the integrity of these ancient medical men of our society who stubbornly resisted the onslaught unleashed on them by the orthodox law-givers? And what dictum did the medical men enunciate as the fundamental axiom for their science?

The **Caraka-samhita** says among other things that "any success attained without reasoning is as good as sheer accidental success" (vina tarkena ya siddhih yadriccha siddhireva sa). And yet our revivalist champions portray ancient Indian science as a complete and perfect body of systematised knowledge! This raw opinion is repudiated by the ancient methodologists themselves when they confess to their shortcomings and limitations. "The little known and the vast unknown" is what beckons them to renewed scientific activity, but our all-knowing savants among the revivalists turn a deaf ear to all their warnings about the scientific discipline.

Yet another factor that the revivalists conveniently forget is that ancient Indian science had a firm materialist basis. This "forgetfulness" is because of their bias for the idealist school of philosophical thought. The dual personality of the revivalist of today consists in his pretentious professing of the illusory nature of the world and the disgusting manner in which he goes about amassing wealth all the same.

Our ancient Indian scientists were singularly free from this blemish as they posited the reality of the objective world as something independent of the subjective consciousness of the perceiver and they squarely stood up to the wrath of the spiteful orthodox law-givers instead of meekly submitting to their dictates for the sake of comfort and money.

In cases where they displayed a dual personality, they did

so consciously as the only means of propagating their scientific conclusions. They knew how orthodoxy would mercilessly trample upon their alleged heretical views, and hence they couched their findings in a language acceptable to the orthodoxy. Their devotion to science and preseverence in the face of heavy odds thus remain an inspiring chapter in the history of Indian science.

The inescapable question faced by the revivalists of today is whether they are courageous enough to follow in the footsteps of the great masters of ancient Indiaby eschewing romanticism and by braving the monster of vested interests in its own den. If they dare not do it for any reason, then it does not lie in their mouth to sing panegyrics to ancient Indian science. One who renounces the principles, method and objectives that the ancient Indian scientists so deeply cherished, has no right whatsoever to show himself off as their trusted follower. A dishonest reverence for ancient Indian science is worse than a pronounced anti-science bias. And that is precisely what the revivalists are guilty of.

—Deccan Herald
April 17, 1982

A NOTE ON THE STUDY OF HISTORY

The recent fiasco about the withdrawal of certain text-books of history, published by the NCERT, at the instance of some top political leaders who choose to remain anonymous has resulted in the revival of the discussion regarding the writing of Indian History. It is averred that one school of historians has injected some "isms" into the methodology of history and has thereby made objectivity a casualty. This criticism itself smacks of an open support to some other "isms", but that is sought to be bypassed. In the sphere of philosophy and art, there have long been controversies centering round the nature and function of these disciplines. There is obviously no valid reason why history must be excluded from the controversy.

Even a casual glance at the results of historical research and endeavours in the writing of history shows that during the late 19th and early 20th centuries British scholars and Indian nationalists arrived at diametrically different positions in the evaluation of India's past and its relevance for the contemporary epoch. This was because the two sets of historians, consisting of Mill, Macaulay, Vincent Smith and the like on the one hand and Tilak, Jayaswal, Ghoshal and such others on the other, had two different purposes. Naturally the divergence in approach and emphasis was inescapable. The former group, accordingly, found reasons for denigrating the "murky" past, as also its social and political institutions while the latter enthusiastically romanticised the past and discovered wild traces of the golden age and reconstructed the picture of a glorious utopia in the past. A few European scholars also

joined the Indian nationalist chorus in singing the panegyrics of India's past for the wrong reasons. Those among the present day intellectual and political leaders who draw a fine line of demarcation between "modern knowledge" and "ancient wisdom" and who see clear marks of nuclear technology, quantum theory and thermodynamics in our ancient treatises are the ultra-modern editions of our erstwhile romantic historians. There are still others who seek to establish the tenets of science in ancient India through the inexorable channel of faith. Those who "prove" the efficacy of auto-urine therapy through this "infallible" method belong to this category. It is significant that our present Prime Minister had written to a Yogi who had the audacity of subjecting the claims of Yoga to modern scientific analysis way back in the 30's that faith and not analysis was the clue to the scientific genre of our ancient seers and their enunciations. Such attitudes and platitudes may nourish various hues of chauvinism but they cannot belong to the province of either history or science.

It is remarkable how these two sets of historians, quietly ignored the fundamental aspects in the making of history, whether of the past or of contemporary times, namely the people working in a variety of changing social formations with their own peculiar production or property relations. It was as late as in 1956 that D.D. Kosambi, of towering fame as a historian, wrote in his **Introduction to the Study of Indian History** : "History is defined as the presentation, in chronological order, of successive developments in the means and relations of production." (Popular Prakashan, 1975 edition, p 1). Much the same is stated in a different way when Romila Thapar, another of our eminent (and much maligned) historians, says : "Political histories and dynastic studies remain an important aspect of historical interpretation but these are (to be) viewed in the light of other features which go into the making of a people and a culture. Changes in the political pattern are inextricably entwined in changes in the

economic structure and these in turn have a bearing on social relationships" (**A History of India**, Volume 1, Pelican Books, p. 22). As Satish Chandra put it succinctly in his Presidential address at the 38th session of the Indian History Congress held at Bhubaneswar in 1977, "History is not just a catalogue of wars, civil commotions, oppression and the deeds of heroes. It must basically deal with the growth of the human spirit and human civilisation in the context of the development of society".

In the great and exciting adventure of man making himself through the ages since primitive days, the hero is mankind in the collective sense, with its exraordinary (or even, miraculous, if you want) ability to devise and use newer and more complex tools all the time. The inexhaustible richness of this talent belongs not to one or even a few person or persons. To look for "the deeds of heroes" as a substitute for the massive efforts of mankind in shaping civilization and culture (which is what history is all about) is to mistake the trees for the wood. The labyrinthine maze in tracing the evolution of Indian society which many of our historians have so gleefully and callously created is many times the product of this eagerness to look for heroes, or in the alternative to find scapegoats.

It is simple enough to dismiss the whole of this argument as a grossly misconceived one with the simplistic cliche of a counter-argument that this is the stock-in-trade of the exponents and adherents of what has come to be described as "economic determinism." But unfortunately nobody can with an argument by hurting abuses at one's critics. Nor is the "economic interpretation of history" all that deterministic. This might well be illustratedwith a reference to the history of science, for example. If Newton did not explain nature as comprehensively as Einstein did, was it because he was a lesser scientist ? Or, if Tilak didnot succed in liberating ndia from the colonial yoke, was it because he was a lesser

patriot than, say, Gandhiji ? In both these cases, as in all other cases of the historical development of knowledge and society, a particular historical situation acts as an inevitable constraint. Even granting unlimited scope to intuition (irrespective of what its true nature is), knowledge at a given stage of history does not extend beyond certain very strict limits Even so is the case with social and political institutions that we come across in the course of history. There may, therefore, be some exciting charm attached to ancient treatises and societies, but we cannot please ourselves with discoveries of the most modern knowledge or political and social patterns in the records of ancient history.

How come that we "discover", say, quantum theory in ancient texts only **after** the theory is enunciated in modern times and terms ? Why did not the researcher of 1900, for instance, enunciate that theory as found in ancient texts ? The conclusion is inescapable that we are turning out adepts who cleverly impose modern knowledge on ancient texts and that is not the best way of honouring and using the ancient texts either.

Not far dissimilar from this is the manner in which historical episodes and epochs of the past are sometimes assessed. Let us, for example, take the myth of the "golden age" itself. Were not the rigours of the caste system a reality during that period ? Were there no social and hierarchical conflicts then ? Suffice it to remember that the highly dogmatic law-books (of Manu, Goutama, Apastamba, etc.) and the greatest social drama in the sanskrit language, namely the **Mricchakatika** (the little clay-cart), are more or less coeval with this "golden age." By what standards do we pass judgement about an age if the period when the poor drahmin Charudatta and the courtesan Vasantasena fell victims to the social dynamics of the age as the "golden age" ? It cannot very convincingly be argued that the "golden age" refers to the resurgence of culture through multifarious activities, and thus the horrors of social stratification are of no consequence for the discussion.

Max-Muller has for this reason, described the period as the period of Indian Renaissance. This, however, is no helpful argument as the question remains as to whose culture it is. People's culture as a whole or culture of a section of the people ? It is not the former, as the bulk of the population is unrepresented in the culture of this age as we know it. And if it is the latter, the limitations of the "goldness" of the age must be recognised. Are we unduly harsh if we conclude that it was "golden" for a particular lobby in society then and is found "golden" by another lobby of today corresponding to its prototype ? To take the caste formations itself for closer analysis is beyond the scope of this brief note. But it must be stated that castes arose in a definite historical socio-economic background and the phenomenon of caste cannot be wished away, however repugnant the caste diabolism be in our body politic. The structure can and will collapse only under an entirely new socio-economic framework and sufficiently long after it will have outlived its utility. Till such time comes, absolutely a-historical deductions and perspectives can continue to be made and presented or even philistine solutions like inter-caste marriages can be advocated as the panacea for the catastrophe of caste.

Let us look at another crucial factor in Indian History, especially in the matter of the writing of history. The variance in the modern historian's approach towards the "Moghul Period" (a thoroughly inaccurate and unscientific nomenclature, but still used here because of the general usage) and the "British Period" (more honestly described as the era of colonial plunder of the east) can possibly be explained authentically as the particular historian's affinity with obscurantism, religious chauvinism, and the apparently "harmless" designs of imperialism. In other words, the reaction of the historian to the events of the present day finds reflection in his presentation of the developments of the past.

Just one minor illustration : (Of course, not against

historians of the acumen of P. N. Oka, whose works are an apology for history, but against some of the less vulnerable ones). Who hasn't come across the oft repeated statement that the aggressions of the 10th and 11th centuries devastated the sacred temples of India ? Nobody need hold any brief for those marauders. But suppression of facts amounts to suggestion of falsehood in history. Thus, a true historian cannot suppress the fact that Sri Harsha of Kashmir (c. 1100 A.D.), no aggressor and no non-hindu, much less anti-hindu, had a minister designated as the "Devotpatana Mantri", whose function was to transform idols in temples into metal at times of need (possibly, at times of war). This is the evidence we get from the only historian of pre-modern India, namely, Kalhana, author of **Rajatarangini**. What have the hindu kings done to the Buddhist and Jain monasteries ? Or, how about a contemporary of Alauddin Khilji, namely Zia Barani, accusing the former as an anti–Islamic heretic ? These and scores of other material must be properly scanned before an ultimate verdict about a whole age is passed.

Distortion of history from the communal political angle will then be impossible and unnecessary. Attention could also then be paid to the understanding of those elements in Indian society which had reduced it into such a state of fragility that it fell prostrate before the very first attacker from outside. Why had disintegration taken place to such a high degree ? Why was there no coherent and united opposition from the local chieftain X a betrayer, chieftain Y a coward, or chieftain Z a lover of his harem above all else? The prowess or idiosyncracy of one or the other of the heroes does not explain a whole movement in history. What then are the other and more important factors ? How are they to be correlated ? What did the people think so that they acted as they did ? These questions must be raised and answered.

That is precisely where some of our historians have failed, not because they are always jaundiced in their view, but be-

cause they do not use the scientific instruments of history forcefully and copiously. This brings us back to what we started with, and that, incidentally, is the most genuine scientific apparatus for a serious historian, namely that man as a member of the social group to which he belongs is the maker of history and that he makes history not as it pleases him but only as circumstances (of production relations and those allied to it) allow him to, and that, therefore, a scientific approach to history demands an analysis of the means and relations of production during successive periods of history.

—*Science Circle Bulletin*,
vol. 1, no. 5 (May–June 1979)

THE PROBLEM OF CASTE

THE year 1776 is justifiably a great date in the annals of human history. It heralded a new era essentially owing allegiance to the fundamental values of life asserted unequivocally by Tom Paine in **The Rights of Man**. Whether those values are still regarded as relevant by the successors to the legacy of the American War of Independence, despite all the hullabaloo about human rights, is an important question which cannot be gone into here. Even as the 1776 war of independence was drawing to a close, a certain book seemed to be growing in popularity in Germany. This book was Rochow's **Children's Friend**. What was the author's intention in writing the memorable book ? "To teach the youthful offsprings of the peasants and artisans of their vocation in life and their duties to their superiors in society and in the state, and likewise to inspire in them a beneficent contentment with their lot on earth, with black bread and potatoes, serf labour, low wages, paternal thrashings and other delectations of this sort, and all that by means of the system of enlightenment which was then in vogue" (F. Engels : **Anti-Duhring**, P. 221). Echoing this apparently noble philosophy, Duhring, a 19th century German Professor, in his **Course of Philosophy** declares that "real labour, in some form or other, is the natural social law of healthy human beings". A minority of human beings obviously must remain outside the sphere of health, for labour to them is unknown. The offspring of peasants and artisans, however, should be pleased, and rightly too, at the nobility of their labour, although born and bred in poverty. They must realise that the food they eat is the fruit of their honest labour and must feel relieved at having escaped from suffering indigestion, consti-

pation, and other such abominable diseases that are the bane of wealthy gluttons. The homily can proceed further along these lines, but it is unnecessary for our purposes. There is nothing very mysterious in these pronouncements nor are we strangers to them. There is a proverb in Kannada which says: "Poor man, reconcile yourself to your station in life", which is much the same as saying: "all honour to you and all honorarium to me". The diabolism contained in the proverb is no more mysterious than that behind the philosophy Rochow tried to preach. The galling thing is that many a text-book of ours propagates the same stuff much more clandestinely, but quite seriously nevertheless.

These then are the questions before us: Why should the poor remain poor ? Who is it that makes them poor ? Why should the poor submit to the designs and dictates of the rich ? What will happen to the rich if the poor oppose them ? What must the rich do to prevent the poor from harbouring any thoughts even remotely rebellious ? What system must they create and perpetuate to save themselves ? How praise it, how give it divine sanction, how popularise its philosophy ? And finally, what effect does such a system have on society ?

While answering such questions, it is impossible not to talk of castes and classes. The caste system is the most malignant tumour in the body of our nation. Our hierarchical society which is vertically divided has the structure of a social pyramid. When one thinks of and analyses this system with a view to destroying it, one cannot but appreciate the above questions. Sometime ago I had the opportunity of exchanging some ideas about the caste system with a Professor of Sanskrit in one of the universities in the State of Karnataka. Here are his astonishing arguments:

"The caste system is a recent development in Indian society. It is true that long ago, that is, in ancient India, there was the **varna** stratification. But this had no reflection on the

social position and status of men. People belonging to the different **varnas** were all equal. None was superior to the other. The term **varna** served only to determine the occupation of the individuals. Those who had some occupation or the other belonged to the first three **varnas.** Moreover, since everybody had some occupation or the other (that is, since there was nothing like unemployment at all), there was no such group as the **shudras.** It was a hypothetical class. People who satirise the **varna** division and deride our ancient society are ignorant of history. It is essential to understand today's caste system in this light", Etc.

Need I say that this gentleman too talks like a Rochow ? It is difficult to explain history in a more preposterous manner. This is nothing but an attempt to deliberately forget problems instead of facing them. Karl Marx anticipated such a sophistry in argumentation when he ridiculed Prodhoun's facile analysis of the series of economic evolutions as based on 'division of labour' and posed the question with some irony : "Was not the caste regime also a particular division of labour ?" (Letter dt. 28th Dec. 1846 to Annenkov ; **Selected Works of Marx and Engels**, Vol. 1, Moscow 1969, P. 520.)

We can accept that the **varna** division existed in ancient Indian society prior to the highly rigid caste system. It is possible, too, that this division was based on the occupation of the people, or that it was functional **in division.** In other words, when people have different occupations and involved in different productive tasks and when production and distribution take place at a rapid rate on a large scale, division of labour becomes a necessity. This division of labour, perhaps, might also have contributed to the **varna** classification though certainly by itself it could not have been the reason. The antagonism between the Aryans who came from outside and the different groups of people who were already living in this geographical area might have given rise to the **varna** division as Toynbee and many others hold. Nobody, however,

has come up with the startling discovery as yet that the **Dasyus** who comprised part of the different comunities and tribal groups originally living in India voluntarily submitted themselves to the mode of life of the alien hordes or that they willingly accepted the division of the new society into the **varnas**. It must be recognised here that the struggle which originated then is still taking place in our midst today. Illustrations from the contemporary situation are superfluous, howsoever one chooses to colour them with political objectives.

It is stated in the **Shantiparva** of the Mahabharata that the **varna** division is based on the occupations of the people, while the **Gita** goes a step further and asserts that this division was made on the basis of not only the occupation but also the 'nature' (bad, good, better, and best !) of the people. Some of our eminent intellectuals who like to think that our ancient society was of a veritable paradisical order have always clung to these sentences in a desperate attempt to conceal the unbroken relentless struggle that has been going on for long in this country, and scholars are not wanting who vociferously defend the caste system precisely on the ground that it is a division based on the 'inherent nature' of persons. But the problem that the people of the epic age faced was in a way sublimated by the author of the **Mahabharata** by rationalising the **varna** system and thereby infusing it with some credibility. The **Mahabharata** records that the classification of persons into the four castes is rather innocuous in view of the commonness of feelings among the people belonging to different **varnas**, feelings like desire, anger, fear, avarice, anxiety, joy, exhaustion, etc., irrespective of their occupations. In other words, the question they faced was : Is it right to create obstacles in the path of the people in the name of the **varnas** when the aspirations of all men are more or less identical ? The **varna** system may for the purposes of an argument be regarded as a functional division, but that does not justify the rigid hierarchical privileges in society, which

in practice the caste system has prepetuated in our country. Is it conducive to the overall development of society to permanently assign the occupations to certain sections of the population, *i.e.*, to **compulsorily** make an occupation a hereditary matter? It is impossible to deny that the caste system in practice meant exactly that. The **Apastamba Dharma Sutra** ordains categorically: "There are four castes, namely, brahmins, kshatriyas, vaishyas and shudras. Of these, each preceding caste is nobler than and superior to the succeeding caste **by virtue of its very birth**. The non-shudras may study the **veda**, make fire-offerings (*i.e.*, perform rituals and sacrifices), and avoid the coarse tasks. The prime duty of the shudras shall be to serve the other castes. The nobler the caste of the master or masters chosen by him to serve, the greater the merit that accrues to him." Such quotations can be multiplied, but it is unnecessary.

In the language of Shaw's Undershaft of Major Barbara fame, this is the motto of the "unashamed". It was not for nothing that Marx spoke of the 'preservation of the sanctity of the veda by not allowing the others to read it'. Making knowledge the special preserve of a few has its own advantages for the oppressing class. The corollary of it, of course, is the glorification of intellectual labour while decrying manual labour. Spending more money on higher education than on elementary and secondary education in a country where the illiterates constitute 70% of the population is only another manifestation of this same prejudice.

Some avenues would have opened up for a genuine scientific analysis of the subject, had the honourable Dr. Radhakrishnan and his followers, who talk with felicity of the 'glory of ancient India', bestowed some thought to the statements such as the one from the Apastamba Dharma Sutra translated above. But they relegate them into the background or ignore them altogether and yet claim to present a true account of the social set up of ancient India. Would it

be absurd to think that these beloved and trusted allies of the Establishment, trying to incapacitate in word and deed those who are struggling against the oppressors, should make an attempt towards a truly scientific, and hence unbiased, analysis of Indian society ?

The fact that Apastamb quietly ignores the theory that the 'varnas' are based on occupation and the 'inherent nature' of men, and states instead that they are determined solely by birth, is a death-blow to the rather convenient theories of many of our historians, sociologists, and interpreters of philosophy. That is why they push into oblivion the glaring explanations as those of 'Apastamba'. Yet they are the finest exponents of Indian tradition and culture ! While discussing the caste system, we had better take cognisance of what Apastamba has to say alongside of what the 'Gita' professes. It may incidentally be noted that people who call themselves brahmins say while citing their geneologies (gotra and pravara) that they belong to the Apastamba Sutra, Boudhayana Sutra. Ashvalayana Sutra, etc., and not that they are brahmins belonging to such and such an occupation but still brahmins by virtue of the specifications in the 'Gita' ! To me it appears thut while the Gita rationalises a blemish in ancient Indian society, the 'dharma sutras' openly record the general thinking and practice that prevailed. Just as today's pundits very cleverly ask us to turn to ancient India with its hoary cultural patterns (without, of course, telling what those patterns were) in their attempt to deceive the ignorant and the gullible and thus to wean them away from anti-caste struggles, so, it seems to me, do our 'Gita' experts try to cover up the cruelty of the past with pleasing and tantalising quotations from the Gita and such other treatises. To say the least, it is a-historical. At its worst, it might even be deception. The Taoist philosophy of China says : "The shameless become rich, and good talkers become high officials....Small robbers are put in prison ; but great robbers become feudal lords, and there on the gates o the feudal lords will your 'righteous scholars' be found... Do

not those who are vulgarly called wise prove to be but collectors for the great thieves? And do not those who are considered sages then prove to be but guardians in the interest of great thieves?" (Quoted by Debiprasad Chattopadhyaya in his '**Lokayata**', Delhi, 1968 ed. p. 347). It is to be hoped that our scholars consciously or otherwise do not end up as worthy illustrations for the Taoist criticism. However, it is impossible to make a more ruthless and castigating charge against our scholars who offer inane explanations in defence of the caste and **varna** phenomena. It is harsh, but not altogether unjustified. One wishes that it were incorrect; but chances are that one is likely to be disappointed.

One incontrovertible fact of today is that the caste system is heinous and that it hinders social progress. But it does not vanish if, like one of the three proverbial monkeys of Gandhiji, we sit with our eyes closed. It is futile even to ask ourselves whether it would be possible to reverse the harm done by the caste system by extolling the virtues of ancient India. Be it not forgotten that the caste system is the legitimate child of the much colourfully painted 'sanathana dharma'. There is the unpalatable contradiction clearly seen in those who unreservingly oppose the caste system and still fondly cling to the 'sanathana dharma' in view of its alleged faith in ennobling human values. No one has detested the caste barriers more intensely nor fought against them more determinedly than Gandhiji. Yet this Mahatma described himself as a follower of 'sanathana dharma.' Sanathana dharma' may loudly cherish the laudable ambition umpteen times through pronunciations like 'sarve janah sukhino bhavanthu' (may one and all be happy) but one might very well also retort: "sarve janah katham kena margena ca sukhino bhavishyanti?" (How and by what means will one and all be happy?) For, the first of the above two statements is as misleading as the biblical saying: "Blessed are the poor, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven". Those who seek to prove the virtues of the 'sanathana dharma' by citing the examples of Sathyakama, Valmiki, etc., as ex-

amples of those who were highly accomplished and considered so notwithstanding their castes, must also remember the stories of Ekalavya, Karna and Shambuka who were ruined mainly because of their castes in spite of their genius. We must simply accept the unpleasant truth that the caste division has been an essential feature of our traditional way of life and that it cannot be wished away. That does not mean that the concept of 'dharma' itself is being castigated here. There are **dharmas** and **dharmas**. It is not always used to connote 'virtue' only. It has other dimensions as well; it indicates the caste-duties also and only in that sense is the dharma to be rejected. In the broader sense, it is nothing but a conscious attitude towards life, a point of view concerning the social environment, an ideology concerning the attainment of an objective, conclusion regarding the processes of life in the universe.

There would be no prolem if these rcligions remained at the intellectual and mystic levels only. But they have filtered down into society and have polluted the life of man, even granting that they have also been 'sighs of the oppressed creatures and hearts of a heartless world'. At the hands of many learned men these religions have become powerful instruments of exploitation. Who, for instance, is a more ardent follower of Jainism than Mr. Birla? This 'saintly philanthropist' has, I would bet, spent less money on the construction of temples than he has 'saved' by evading the tax regulations. The social status gained by persons of this kind is one of the surprising enigmas of the present day world. The respectability they thus gain masks their ugly designs on the economic front. My point is simply this: The bourgeoisie exploits the gullible people in the name of 'dharma' and firmly entrenches itself socially and politically. I am not for a moment suggesting that this is the only or even the principal means of power for the bourgeoisie. The so called 'dharma' is one of the instruments that enables them to strengthen their grip on the production apparatus and, consequently, on the working

people of the country. That is why the bourgeoisie are as vociferous in defending their own brand of 'dharma' today as it was before. The stout defence of the 'fundamental rights', enjoined in our Constitution, **in their case** is mostly restricted to the defence of one of the rights, namely, the right to property. Afraid of defending the caste system in public, the bourgeoisie profess catholicism in the open, but nevertheless seek to intensify caste antagonism through dubious methods. The elite among the so called lower castes is a party to the machinations of the exploiting sections. This is the path of righteousness that capitalist religion pursues. The positive side of religion is a casualty in this bargain and the crudeness of it alone is left for the consumption of the masses. It amounts in socio-economic practice to what Marx observed in a different context ; "In the nineteenth century the English aristocracy said: For us pious phrases; for the peoples Christian practice. The classical saint of Christianity mortified **his** body for salvation of the souls of the masses ; the modern educated saint mortifies **the bodies of the masses** for the salvation of **his** soul".

One is blind to reality if one thinks that the class divided society can be prevented from undergoing change. This blindness gives rise to several institutions that the bourgeoisie hopes will prevent social change. Religion is one such institution. The bourgeoisie adopts several methods to realise its aim. There is, for example, the bourgeois constitution that upholds the virtues of private property. The policies of a bourgeois government always bear the continued well-being of the capitalist class in mind. The much talked about education system, again, is designed to protect private property, even without taking into consideration the 'privateness' of education imparted through public funds in the country. Like various other institutions, religion, too, is an instrument of the bourgeoisie. Unless, therefore, religion itself is assigned its due limited role, there will be no end to the evils that the caste system causes. Since all religions function as the evil

weapons of the bourgeoisie they must all be uniformly viewed as detrimental to society when they have outgrown their utility, and real scientific progress achieved through their denial to a great extent. That some very sincere people, who fight with the utmost concern against certain manifestations of superstitions, become silent when it comes to the question of a scientific analysis of society is probably due to the rigid allegiance they owe to their own religions. But these people must recognise that the "history of all hitherto existing societies is the history of class-struggles". The nature of the class struggle is not always the same at all times and places. Indian society has successively passed through the ages of the 'varna' system and the caste system. The feudal system of the Middle Ages, with its powerful remnants still dominant in our midst, is a force to reckon with along with the capitalist anarchy that is a dubious gift of the recent colonial past. The latter has assumed new dimensions also during the post-independence period. It is only natural that with the changes in society class struggles should assume new forms.

The division of society into **varnas**, castes and classes indicates the several stages in its historical development. And need it be stressed that class consciousness has not developed enough to be effective in our society yet? It is not the object of this discussion to go into its causes. But the Day of Judgement for the bourgeoisie will come when the working people become class conscious and find their allies for the genuine democratic struggle. But it is absolutely necessary to oppose and destroy the caste system before one can hope to be class conscious. The two most important features of feudalism still prevalent in Indian society are the caste system and the feudalistic mode of ownership of land, with all its consequential effects. Since each complements the other, unless there is a fundamental change in the pattern of land ownership it is impossible to get rid of the caste system, no matter how seriously we go about abolishing caste marks and caste names. Incidentally, the removal of bonded labour is also connected

with this. One does not need to be a sociologist of international reputation to see the fact that it is the landless agricultural worker who is harassed most and whose huts are burnt if he is not himself burnt alive in rural India. The situation is slightly different in urban India, but the difference is quantitative, not qualitative. The political factors arising out of this are also within our grasp if we care to analyse.

Let us take one simple illustration. Untouchability has been done away with by our Constitution. Yet no dent has been made in the social system that perpetuates this monstrous practice. This is no surprise since our noble constitution also teaches the virtues of and protects the **cause** of this problem, namely, private property in land, as in its other forms. We do not yet have the social awareness and apparatus that can get rid of landed property being concentrated in a few hands. The feudal elements in our society prevent us from doing so. The lack of political will in the implementation of land reforms cannot be explained otherwise. And now there is not even much talk about it. Still we are told quite seriously that we are out to eradicate the evil of untouchability in five years. Old habits die hard and we do not seem to be inclined to recognise the futility of simplistic palliatives. We are being pedestrian reformists when we think that we can have a clear conscience by converting the alleged untouchables into 'harijans' ! We are only being bigger reformists when we throw open the doors of our temples to them. This process which began almost half a century ago has still not been completed. If we stop beating around the bush and accept the untouchables as our brethren, as human beings like ourselves, well, that would constitute a veritable revolution inour context. There is no crying need for the upper castes to benevolently and patronisingly invite harijans to enter theirtemples. For, no God is going to moan loudly if neither the harijans nor the upper caste men visit his holy precincts ! The real issues are quite different. They relate to an equal and dignified social life, with its roots in a

viable economic status. It is not a question of the change of hearts and novel human sentiments, but a question of economic independence and real equal opportunities. The hearts will take care of themselves if the latter is attended to. With due deference to the founding fathers and mothers of our constitution, it must be said that it reflects the general aspirations of all sections of society while protecting only the interests of a particular section through the sacrosanct nature conferred on property. Sanctity of property in a country where the majority are property-less is a mischievous and mocking paradox. This same constitution also bans the practice of untouchability even though it makes no attempt to create the economic conditions and social atmosphere necessary for the removal of this evil. So much so, we are asked to believe that incidents like the one in Belchi occur because of personal or family feuds. **Mutatins mutandis**, this holds good for the caste system, too. Political manipulations based on caste are too glaring to be missed by anyone. We must appreciate the painful fact that Gandhiji's tireless battle against untouchability and the caste system did not yield the expected dividends because he somehow discounted the importance of the most fundamental problem relating to the land question. Less said the better about the later apparent correctives in the form of bhoodan, sarvodaya, etc. It is remarkable that the Swaran Singh Committee of the then ruling party, which suggested various constitutional amendments categorically rejected the demand for the abolition of the Right to Private Property. The advantages enjoyed by the ruling classes may hardly be expected to be given up through formal constitutional amendments. Our ability for clever fooling is by now proverbial. We have displayed it yet again. We are formally a 'socialist' country, in addition to being sovereign, secular, and democratic : and presumably we now believe that socialism can be ushered in without the abolition of private property. To aid us in this, we are rich enough in intellectual acrobats who can come up with new fascinating definitions of socialism itself. If they fail, some resourceful political leader will fill the gap and develop an alluring modern

social philosophy ! They may be depended upon to convince you that there is absolutely no contradiction between private property and socialism. We must see through thegame of such intellectual jugglery and devious politics.

The production apparatus of the past which was handled by the artisans and craftsmen was not antagonistic to the caste system. On the contrary, it fostered it eminently. But industrialisation has, happily, brought about some disintegration of the caste system, albeit very peripheral. The orthodox brahmin who performs the **upakarma** rites (changing the sacred thread he wears) without any knowledge of the **veda** or the **vedanta**, the sole agent of Indian culture who does not wish to read the history of India properly lest his romantic conceptions be shattered, the broadminded liberal and educated people who participate secretly in caste conferences, and the 'importer of alien philosophy', namely the Communist, are all, in one way or the other, equal participants in the production system of this country. The urban elites, worried that they might any day lose their grand positions in society due to the inexorable social changes, are mostly practising the customs of their castes only in the safety of their homes. Under the new dispensation, things may change for the worse' because we are now more 'pragmatic', and so we 'redefine' the status of industry by orienting it with a rural bias. This is not a purely economic doctrine or choice, by any means; it is bound to have its impact on social dynamics.

The prime question, then, is whether we will talk the matter out by not rising the crucial issue of economic institutions while tackling the menace of castes, or whether we will have it as an important point on our agenda to be discussed alongside of the hard facts of economic and political life in the country. Caste is a social phenomenon with deep overtones of the economic and the political maladies. It cannot be viewed, much less solved, in isolation. It emerged in a specific historical context and it can go only in a new historical con-

text. How that new context must be created is for students of contemporary society to analyse and practise. That analysis and practice are bound to suggest the basic solutions along a particular path.

—*Topics and Opinions,*
Nov. 15, 1977 and Dec. 1, 1977

THE ECONOMIC WAR

"And it is the truth that men are cruel and stupid and that they suffer themselves to be driven even to destruction by shepherds as stupid as themselves. I thought of my passion for universal justice, of my desire that all men should be free, leisured, educated, of my imaginations of a future earth peopled by human beings who should live according to reason". It is easy to dismiss this vision of Aldous Huxley[1] as utopian and reconcile ourselves to the vagaries of our socio-economic life in which the present inequalities in the distribution of wealth are constantly being accentuated. And yet it does not seem to be a state which will remain perpetually so. Our country has passed through grave trials, but has witnessed great battles also. The correlation of forces in the country has been changing and will continue to change in favour of the peoples' liberation from the aggressive and oppressive evil of the exploitative machinery.

The cruelty of oppression cannot be illustrated in full precisely because it is so rampant that figures do not give the entire picture. The gory image of India can be partially obtained from the following :

(*a*) A harijan was shot dead in U.P. sometime in 1975 because he was slow in carrying grains from the field to the landowner's residence. The killer was the landlord who had himself not participated in the cultivation of the land.

(*b*) A reactionary legislator from Khaurad of Ujjain

District, M. P., celebrated his daughter's marriage with great **eclat** recently. Contained in the dowry was a servant-maid also ! This maid had the audacity to give a slip to her new masters and run away to her village. The enraged coterie of the "cultured" legislator caught hold of the girl and her parents and beat them black and blue. Their dilapidated house was also acquired by these people.[2]

(*c*) The Union Minister for Labour commenting on the state of bonded labour in the country stressed the need for central legislation in June, 1975, prior to the proclamation of the Emergency. The **Deccan Herald** editorially commented on this on 8th Juue and pointed out that a correct economic policy and not simply a legislation was the right solution to the problem.

(*d*) A family of five in South Kanara District committed suicide early last year. Hunger, and not any complication in the matters of love, was the reason.

(*e*) In a village in U. P., huts belonging to harijans were burnt and a few human beings also were burnt alive in the process. A harijan was kept in a landowner's house without food for three days, women were raped and beaten up, and a group of these villagers had to even leave the village for good. They held a demonstration before the Prime Minister's residence in Delhi.

(*f*) The per capita private consumer expenditure in the country was Rs. 289.6 in 1968–69 (at 1960–61 prices).[3]

(*g*) A total of 4 million and 68,000 unemployed persons had registered themselves as applicants on the live registers of the about 480 employment exchanges in

the country in 1971. This figure has increased considerably over the years. According to the scientific journal of thc CSIR, **Technical Manpower**, from which the above figures are taken, it appears that 162,000 scientific, engineering technological and medical personnel at degree and diploma levels were unemployed and looking for jobs in April 1971. One 1973 report of the Reserve Bank of India said that employment opportunities in the factories and offices in 1972–73 remained as they were in 1971–72.[4] It also said that the number of unemployed persons on the live registers of employment exchanges in June 1973 stood at 76 lakh. The situation has worsened latterly, however vehemently one might deny that a recession has set in.

(*h*) The assests of the 75 industrial empires listed by the Monopolies Inquiry Commission amounted to Rs. 4032.4 crores in 1967–68.[5] It is reasonable to suppose that further monopoly growth has since resulted.

(*i*) The arrears of income-tax due is said to be around Rs. 800 crores at present. This pertains to the acknowledged tax payment, the unacknowledged being unknown. The Black money which even now lies hidden despite the nice overtures of a not very stiff Government is still running a parallel economy notwithstanding the arrest of inflation. If this is not manifest, it is at least clear that the potential has not been blunted.

(*j*) Foreign monopolies which dominate the Indian drug industry are literally fleecing and strangling the people of our country. The Hathi Committee report submitted to Govornment in April 1975 has made about 200 recommendations to make essential drugs available to the masses at reasonable prices. An

important proposal is nationalisation of the foreign sector. The report has not been accepted yet, but the Minister who was in charge of the concerned portfolio at the time of the submission of the report has been ejected out, possibly because he seemed to be serious about the report. A detailed analysis has brought to light the machinations of this industry. "The balance sheets of thirty topmost foreign companies for the years 1960 to 1970 disclose that these companies had hiked up prices by 400 per cent over the manufacturing cost and reaped fabulous profits. They remitted about Rs. 100 crores abroad over the last 15 years. Concentrating on the production of specific formulations, they deliberately avoided bulk production especially of essential drugs in which the profit rate is relatively low"[6]

(*k*) There were 217 Indian subsidiaries of foreign companies and 532 branches of foreign companies in India as on 31–3–1971 and 31–3–1972 according to the lists compiled by the Department of Company Affairs. This was the information given by the Finance Minister in the Rajya Sabha recently. Further, according to a study published in a recent Reserve Bank of India Bulletin, dividend remittances by foreign companies in India rose by 50% in six years ending 1969-70. Out of 866 foreign firms covered by the R.B.I. study, subsidiaries and minority companies predominated numbering 630. Their production increased from Rs. 60 crores to Rs. 91 crores. At the same time imports went up from Rs. 216 crores to Rs. 286 crores, but their share in the total production declined from 13.8 per cent to 9.3 per cent. Gross profits of these firms increased from Rs. 256 crores in 1964-65 to Rs. 435 crores in 1969-70. The net profits rose from Rs. 101 crores to Rs. 178 crores. The corresponding figures for more recent

years are bound to be more staggering and heart-breaking. The menace of the multinational companies has taken the political form of "destabilisation", a term added to the vocabulary by the ever-inventive international gangsters operating the imperialist machine. Indeed, the threat from the multinationals has assumed such proportions that the non-aligned countries at their Algiers summit had this to declare : "The heads of state denounce before the world public the inadmissible practices of multinational companies which encroach upon the sovereignty of developing countries and violate the principles of non-interference and the right of nations to self-determination which are the basic conditions for political, economic and social progress in these countries.

"In addition, the conference recommends joint action of non-aligned countries in regard to multinational companies within the framework of global strategy designed to qualitatively and quantitatively modify the system of economic and financial relations which have subordinated our countries to the industrialised countries".

Let it be remembered in this context that Indian monopoly subserves the interests of the foreign monopolies. It may be of interest to note here that at the recent session of the U.N. General Assembly India's foreign minister urged that "the **status quo** should change in the direction of new and equitable economic order" to which the thundering U.S. delegate replied by saying that "the United States does not and cannot accept any implication that the world is now embarked on the establishment of something called the new international economic order."

(*l*) The amusing but costly misapplication of technology

> in our circumstances, the import of foreign technology for the manufacture of even such things as chewing gum, lipstick and brassieres, the fraud perpetrated by certain patents, the adamant refusal of the big textile magnets to produce coarse cloth, non-utilisation of our raw materials to the extent possible and necessary, and a hundred other factors of our economy have together contributed to a chaos of a high magnitude. It is a pity that our scientists do not feel bitter enough when they are profusely insulted by the import of technology in spheres where we are thoroughly competent.

It is in the background of all these and many other such factors that the Indian social and economic life needs to be analysed. In other words, the material basis for the manifestation of social and economic evils that are rempant in our midst must clearly be identified if a meaningful and sincere solution is to be found. Text-book solutions, pious and naive proclamations, expression of unbounded sympathy for the "less privileged", platitudes about the millennium that is allegedly dawning, and optimistic forecasts about the prosperity that is round the corner for the common man of India may all serve different purposes, but the economic reality is hardly fully grasped thereby.

And, what is the socio-economic reality in our country ? The foremost truth is that about 40 per cent of our population, especially in the countryside, has to subsist on an average monthly income of around Rs. 30 per month. You can easily imagine the kind of cultural life that these people can partake of. The cruel joke is that a minority with its own class values is never tired of preaching "lofty" culture to the suppressed majority which does not have even the physical strength to rebel, let alone the mental preparedness to do so.

Of the 69 per cent of the Indian population living on agri-

culture as their occupation, as many as 26 per cent are agricultural labourers and only 43 per cent either peasants or landlords. The land relations in this country are, therefore, of crucial importance insofar asthe production relations in a given set up to a large extent determine the nature of society. Superficial observations of society may suggest other reasons for our social maladies, but it does not require any extraordinary skill to recognise that the harijan whose hut is burnt and whose children are thrashed and whose daughters are raped is a landless agricultural labourer who is at the mercy of the monstrous landlord. If he cannot retaliate it is because he cannot stand on his own legs. It is after encountering many such cases that the generalisation is made that "the final causes of all social changes and political revolutions are to be sought, not in men's brains, not in men's better insight into eternal truth and justice, but in changes in the modes of production and exchange. They are to be sought, not in the **philosophy**, but in the **economics** of each particular epoch"[7]. And so let us look at the economics of our agriculture a little more closely.

The production of foodgrains and of commercial crops has more than doubled during the last two decades if the 1950-51 and 1970-71 figures are any indication. But during this same period the percentage of **cultivators** in the total working population has **declined** from 50% in 1950-51 to 43.3% in 1970-71. Correspondingly the percentage of **agricultural labourers** has **increased** from 19.7% to 26.3% and in some states this category has reached almost 35% of the working population. And there you have your "green revolution" in the making! How does this happen? It happens through the eviction of tenants and sharecroppers and the expropriation of poor peasants with small land holdings. Dorothy Wordsworth, sister of the English poet William Wordsworth, noted in her Journals a clear explanation to this. We have the following entry on Sunday, 18th May 1800 : "Went to church; slight showers, a cold air .... A little girl from Coniston came to beg. She had lain out all night—her step-mother had turned her out of

doors....Walked to Ambleside in the evening round the lake. John Fisher overtook me on the other side of Rydale. He talked much about the alteration in the times, and observed that in a short time there would be only two ranks of people, the very rich and the very poor, 'for those who have small estates,' says he, 'are forced to sell, and all the land goes into one hand'. Did not reach home till 10 O'clock".[8] We do not know whether it was because she was distressed at the plight of the poor farmers that she did not reach home till 10 O'clock !

Here is the picture of land ownership in India as it existed in 1961–62 :

(*i*) 39.8% of the landowning class owned less than one hectare each and only 6.9% of the total cultivated land was in their possession.

(*ii*) Those who owned 3 hectares or less (which will thus include those mentioned above also) constituted 74.6% of the households owning land and the land they held came to only 31% of the total cultivated land.

(*iii*) At the other end were 4.5% of the households operating 10 hectares or more holding 28.9% of the cultivated land under their possession.

(*iv*) 13% of the households operating 5 hectares or more held 51.8% of the land under their possession.

What in broad terms is the structure ? Firstly that landlords and fairly viable peasants constitute only one–eighth of the landowning class but hold more than half the land ; and secondly that poor and marginal peasants constitute nearly three-fourths of the households but hold less than one-third of the land. This explains the problems of landlessness, poverty,

hunger, exploitation of the agricultural labourers and poor peasants, starvation deaths and all social evils connected therewith. including bonded labour and burning of harijan huts.

Under these circumstances, who could utilise all the opportunities of bank credits with the banks having their own typical definitions of credit worthiness even after the much talked about netionalisation of fourteen banks, excluding the foreign sharks? And to whom were the services of co-operatives available? And supply of fertilisers, new technology, better seeds, and what have you? Obviously, more or less to the 4.5 per cent of the top rung of the ladder.

Now, however much you invest on this 4.5 per cent sector for growth, either growth, will be only m a r g i n a l or the results of growth will be appropriated by only a small section of the community. This can well be illustrated. During the four plan periods from 1951 to 1973 the Central Government alone invested more than Rs. 8.000 crores on agriculture and irrigation. The growth rate in agricultural production during this period was 3 per cent, which means that even population growth registered a better percentage during the said period.

The need for land reforms must be viewed in this background because the oppression of people is not purely a a social evil; it is what follows from an economic monstrosity. That is also precisely the reason why the problems of the oppressed class cannot be viewed in isolation as something to be solved through the glorious talk of trusteeship, change of heart. god-fearing moral standards, and other such homilies. Let us remember that the "god-fearing saints" and "trustees" in our country are adepts in floating co-optratives and trusts for retaining their ill-gotten wealth, as also in fabricating documents for **benami** possession of lands. A certain individual who was member of the Andhra Legislative Assembly for three terms is alleged to have accounted for his 518.62 acres of

land through family hospitals, high schools, and so on, while holding all the land physically with himself ![9]

Ho Chi Minh, the undaunted noble revolutionary, speaking in the Vietnamese context once said that "land reform is a peasant revolution, a class strugggle in the countryside ; it is a large scale, hard and complicated struggle ; that is why preparations must be carefully made, plans clearly mapped out, the leadership very tight, the localities judiciously chosen, the time strictly followed and the implementation correct. These are conditions leading to success". [10] This is by and large applicable to our present phase also.

The problem of education and literacy is closely allied to the land question in rural India. Compulsory education is a **sine qua non** for not only strengthening our democratic base but also for the fullest utilisation of our potentialities for growth. The dismal image of the country with an illiteracy rate of 71 per cent is a matter of shame and a sign of the lack of political will to squarely tackle the issue. It is to be noted here that of the total outlay of Rs. 79 crores for adult education in the fourth plan, only Rs. 3 crores were spent ! The fifth plan envisages "part-time classes to enable the children (of the 6-11, 11-14 and 14-18 age groups) to get education at the time most convenient to them and the parents" as a solution to the difficulty of enrolment of the children in schools because of the low per capita income and the pattern of employment of labour on agriculture [11]. This is an indirect admission of the fact that children who ought to be in schools aren't there because they are working on the fields, their own or somebody else's ! Night schools for these tired young children is a harsh and cruel solution of a society which has developed elitism in education. The correct solution was observed by the romantic poet William Wordsworth who in his letter to Francis Wrangham from Grasmere on 5th June 1808 had this to say : "You will also have deduced that nothing romantic can be said with truth of the influence of

education upon the district in which I live. We have, thank heaven, free schools, or schools with some endowment, almost everywhere, and almost every one can read ; but not because we have free or endowed schools, but because our land is, far more than elsewhere, tilled by men who are the owners of it ; and as the population is not over-crowded, and the vices which are quickened and cherished in a crowded population do not therefore prevail, parents have more ability and inclination to send their children to School ; muuh more than in manufacturing districts, and also, though in a less degree, more than in agricultural ones, where the Tillers are not proprietors....The influence of our schools in this neighbourhood can never be understood if this their connection with the state of landed property be overlooked".[12]

The issues relating to bonded labour, women, culture, political bossism, electioneering, national awareness, and so on cannot be i s o l a t e d from the land question and the question of production r e l a t i o n s in the industrial sector. As for the question of bonded labour, "the problems that seem to face the administration while tackling the problem seem to be twofold. Firstly, there is the problem of identification, i.e., who are the bonded labourers. And secondly, the problem is one of the rehabilitation of such labourers after they are freed from the clutches of their 'masters'. In fact, both the problems are inter-related." [13] The problem is part of the total problem of the rural poor in the country, especially the debts and mortgages. Here is a heart-rending report from Rajasthan : "29 persons, mostly women and children, belonging to a scheduled caste were recovered from the house of the zamindar of a village by the deputy collector of Ganganagar a few days back. These persons were bonded towards the interest on loans of Rs.200-300 taken by them. Their bondage continued even after the payment of the principal amount. Women were kept away from their children and rape and beatings were habitually committed against them. Kalavathi aged 20 years and Gomati

aged 10 years were among the victims. A case under section 100 IPC has been registered against the culprit". [14] There is no gainsaying the fact that there should be no hesitation to create the political climate that becomes necessary to implement measures against such practices embodied in a ruthless system.

The challenges of this system on the industrial front are less severe despite the "unequivocal support "given by the President of the Federation of the Indian Chamber of Commerce and Industry to the 20 point economic programme which is very much in the air today. Or, there is increased apprehension precisely because the FICCI has also supported it! The letter of the President of the Employers' Federation of India has become an epic document by now, for therein he threatened the Union Labour Minister by proclaiming that "unless the root cause behind the industries" economic difficulties are remedied, bona-fide layoffs will not only be inevitable but may perhaps be on the increase". The near chaotic situation in Industry with several closures and retrenchments that prevails presently has come in the wake of that bold proclamation of the Employers' Federation. And what is the "root cause b e h i n d the industries' difficulties" that the Federation w a n t s the Government to solve? Their indecent internecine warfare, uplanned commodity production, the price situation, or something of that kind? The free for all licensing policy and the much dreaded Bonus Act do not seem to have quenched the thirst of the monopolists. The plan holiday and the opening of the Indian Womb for foreign capital have not pleased them enough. Let it be conceded straightaway that these are hardly the measures to be adopted by a developing country against imperialist and neocolonialist penetrations. But yet we are pursuing them under the pressure of the ruling class which holds the strings of economy in its own hands. As if that were not enough, it is being argued that the workers are getting too much money and thus creating imbalances. Mind you, there is no talk of income-tax dodging

and black money operations coming from that source. They are silent also about the value that the workers are adding by manufacture.

According to the National Commission on Lobour, the percentage share of wages, salaries and benefits to the value added by manufacture stood at 63.6 per cent in 1952. In 1964, the share was 55.3 per cent. And now a Reserve Bank survey (RBI Bulletin, September 1975) of 1650 companies shows that the share has come down to 43.6 per cent in 1973-74. Who has then taken away the major part of the gain? The RBI study covers the period 1970-71 to 1973-74. In this period, the total remuneration to employees including salaries, wages, bonus, PF and welfare expenses rose from Rs. 1070.32 crore to Rs. 1523.42 crore. But the value added by manufacture in the same period shot up from Rs. 2497.19 crore to Rs. 3495.57 crore. The total value of production in this period also rose remarkably from Rs. 7149.60 crore to Rs. 9664.86 crore.[15] From this it should be clear as to who is letting down the country. And they are the status quoists who unhesitatingly act as the henchmen of imperialism.

The upshot of all this is that it is imperative for us to launch a mammoth offensive against the machinations of the exploiting class as a whole by putting our economy in order. This economic war is the fundamental need of our epoch for a healthy and meaningful political, social and cultural life in our country. It is in this background that we view the 20 point economic programme as a potential weapon for unleashing the manifold skills and efforts of our people. It has certainly generated some genuine enthusiasm, although the spurious variety of it is not surely missing. What is more, it will also generate unbounded aspirations for an independent and fresh life. The people may be expected to find appropriate solutions to their problems after this. But it is to be earnestly hoped that the 20-point economic programme is not a facade for an undefined one-pointpolitical programme, in which case a lot of backfirewould

be quite inevitable. To end on a note not altogether frivolous, it is necessary to struggle for the implementation of the first sixteen points to the full. The seventeenth is a point which undoubtedly will get implemented, for it refers to the income-tax relief to the middle class whereby the exemption limit is raised to Rs. 8,000. The next two points will take care of themselves as they pertain to a certain section of the buoyant community of students. The last one about enlarging employment and training facilities, specially for the weaker sections, should receive as much of a priority as the second and fourth ones about land reforms and bonded labour.

(*January 1976*)

REFERENCES :

1. **Those Barren Leaves**, Penguin Classics, p. 131.
2. Homi Daji's statement quoted in the Central News Service
3. V. M. Dandekar and Nilkantha Rath, **Poverty in India**, p. 22.
4. See the April 1972 issue, p. 1
5. **Growth of Indian Monopoly**, AITUC, p. 13
6. Social Scientist, vol. 36, July 1975, p. 53
7. F. Engels : **Anti-Duhring**, p. 316.
8. **Journals of Dorothy Wordsworth**, The World's Classics edition. pp.27-8.
9. New Age (Weekly), Nov. 23, 1975. pp. 10 and 16.
10. **Selected Writings and Speeches**, CPI Publication, 1975, p. 21
11. **Draft Fifth Five Year Plan**, vol. 2, p. 195
12. **Letters of William Wordsworth**, Ed. Philip Wayne, The World's Classics series, p. 111
13. New Age, Jan. 18, 1976, p. 2
14. Ibid., Jan. 25, 1976, p. 11
15. Sadhan Mukherjee in New Age, Jan. 25, 1976, p. 3

MUSINGS ON THE HUMAN RIGHTS DAY

International media of communications being what they are, distortions of situations and events round the globe are not altogether surprising. Exaggerations on the one hand and blacking out of news on the other yield a none too accurate picture of the world as it is. All this is part of the game for winning political advantages in order to make particular ideologies appear more respectable and acceptable than their respective counter ideologies. Yet the Wounded Knee incident, the gruesome Bali Prisons, the Iranian hangman, the Bolivian brutality, and the South African monstrosity do not go unrecognised. This is because the human heart thobs to hear of atrocities perpetrated by man on man, when man might well have been tender towards his fellow creature. The mighty potential of man is not allowed to unfold itself in all its creativity, exuberance, and loveliness because of the terror unleashed on man, or the misery into which he is thrown, or the simple opportunities denied to him. Human civilization stagnates at the pre-historic level as a result of these impediments instead of marching gloriously into the historic phase. The question of human rights has undoubtedly all this vast dimension.

As in other fields of life, here also those who mouth the loudest on the issue of human rights need not necessarily be the most genuinely concerned about them and vice versa. Failings unfortunately are not the monopoly of any one hemisphere of the globe ! The gulf between theory and practice exists enormously though it is reasonable to concede that it is not unbridgeable. The prospects of all human beings being

enabled to exercise even the most fundamental human rights are still remote. It is nevertheless a fact that with the folding up of the colonies and rolling back of imperialism to a considerable extent more and more people have moved towards the realisation of the long cherished aspirations to be men. It was in 1941 that Roosevelt enunciated the four freedoms, freedom of speech, freedom of worship, freedom from want and freedom from fear. The ups and downs that these freedoms have passed through in Roosevelt's own country since then will make interesting reading, not to speak of the progress or regress in other countries that these freedoms have registered. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights was adopted by the United Nations on 10th December 1948 without any dissenting voice. But less brilliant has been the record of translating the Declaration into actual life.

It is customary to simplify the problem by averring that the solution lies in transforming the hearts of the people. No alchemist, however, has so far developed any profound method of bringing about this highly advertised transformation. However, P M.S. Blacket, a renowned contemporary physicist, is very logical when he says, "the uneven division of power and wealth, the wide differences of health and comfort among the nations of mankind, are the sources of discord in the modern world, its major challenge and, unrelieved, its moral doom" (**The Science of Science**, ed. by Maurice Goldsmith and Alan Mackay, Penguin Books, 1969 ; pp. 47 and 64).

The long and short of it all is that objective conditions are not influenced and changed by mere subjective desire or fancy. In the course of history, many a wilful tyrant has trampled upon the dignity and person of man ; but these tyrants could not have been simply wished away by the oppressed and make for themselves the fortune of basking in the sunshine of freedom and culture. The history of man's struggle for self-emancipation traces the evolution of human rights. How the masters grudge the longings of their subordinates, if not slaves, is illustrated in the response of the exploiting

metropole, namely Britain, towards the people of the colony which emerged as a star in the annals of human history in 1776, namely the United States of America. On 18th—19th April 1775, several innocent and brave Americans laid down their lives in the fight at Lexington Common and Concord Bridge. Two British soldiers died in skirmish at Concord Bridge. Their tomb, now part of the general shrine, bears a quatrain beginning

> They came three thousand miles and died
> To keep the past upon its throne.....

(Burrows Dunham : **Heroes and Heretics**, P. 440). During our own times, American troops have bettered the British records and they have been sent to countries more than three thousand miles away. But keeping the past upon its throne is precisely what no one can do. Yet, there are mad men who try to do it, stubborn as they are in the belief that those who rule will rule eternally. Before the epoch-making event of 1776 illumined the world, the oppressor had tried to make short work of the spirited defender of the rights of man, Tom Paine. The then champion of the best in man's traditions, namely the United States, evolves itself into a clandestine supporter of, say, John Vorster during the eighth decade of the twentieth century and then we should go in search of a contemporary Tom Paine to South Africa! We will find one in an Albert Luthuli or a Nelson Mandela. That is how history proceeds and history includes the history of human rights.

Every age thinks beyond its own limited age with the fervour of creative romanticism and envisages a society freed from the shackles it is bound by. Its assertions may not be realised, or even realisable within those historical limits ; but the ideal is not lost sight of. Referring to the noble objectives set forth in the American Declaration of Independence, Abraham Lincoln once observed that the draftsmen of taht instrument "did not mean to assert the obnoxious untruth that

all were then actually enjoying that equality, or yet that they were about to confer it immediately upon them. In fact, they had no power to confer such a boon. They meant simply to declare the **right**, so that the **enforcement** of it might follow as fast as circumstances should permit. They meant to set up a standard maxim for free society which should be familiar to all—constantly looked to, constantly laboured for, and even, though never perfectly attained, constantly spreading and deepening its influence, and augmenting the happiness and value of life to all people, of all colours, everywhere" (Horizons of Freedom, New Delhi, 1969, P. 3). Our own document, namely the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, is a testament of a similar nature. The provisions of the Declaration do not have the force of the system of international law, but the majority of the countries of the world profess to honour the pledge in the name of human rights even as they declare their allegiance to the U. N. Charter. It is, of course, an obvious error to grow cynical over the Declaration of Human Rights and what it has done to humanity.

There is no gain saying the fact that human rights have an application only in the context of a whole social fabric. Stretching it to anarchic limits, therefore, is what the Universal Declaration does not even remotely contemplate. Secondly, man cannot transcend his circumstances and necessity as dictated by nature. Any supervention here will have to be only with the attainment of greater mastery over nature herself. That is briefly what we mean when we say that "freedom is the appreciation of necessity". What characterises this "necessity" in our contemporary socio-economic context both nationally and internationally? This is an important question insofaras it circumscribes the operation of human rights in different countries. It is almost universally recognised that "both political and the international community must devise a just and equitable economic order in which the have-not nations of today and economically weaker sections of the human society may be able to realize human rights in their fullness". Article

28 of the Declaration itself says that "everyone is entitled to a social and international order in which the rights and freedoms set forth in this Declaration can be fully realised". What is the reality of the international order and how conducive is it for the fructification of human aspirations and rights ?

Before having a glimpse at the international order, it may be worthwhile scanning the national scene. The basic constraint in the national scene is that more than forty per cent of our population subsists on an average monthly income of thirty rupees. If the Janatha Party government wants us to correct it to thirtyone rupees, we need not grudge it. But neither civil liberties nor human rights can mean much to this vast populace in the country and it is to our eternal shame not notwithstanding five plans they have remained at that same level. Whether the rolling plans will roll out a red carpet for these oppressed people, we shall not prejudge. All the same, these are the facts that the planners will encounter; of the 69 per cent of the Indian population living on agriculture as their occupation, as many as 26 per cent are agricultural labourers and only 43 per cent either peasants or landlords; In 1962 more than 39 per cent of the land owning people accounted for less than 7 per cent of the total cultivated land and 4.5 per cent held 29 per cent of the cultivated land under their possession. Enjoyment of human rights, opportunities for education and participation in cultural life are bound to be determined by these factors; for, as Engels put it "the final causes of all social changes and political revolutions are to be sought, not in men's brains, not in men's better insight into eternal truth and justice, but in changes in the modes of production and exchange. They are to be sought, not in the **Philosophy**, but in the **economics** of each particular epoch".

Article 23 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights states among other things that "everyone has the right to work, to free choice of employment, to just and favourable

conditions of work and to protection against unemployment". A total of four million and sixtyeight thousand unemployed persons had registered themselves as applicants on the live registers of the employment exchanges in the country in 1971. A 1973 report of the Reserve Bank of India said that the number of unemployed persons in June 1973 stood at 7.6 million. The Janata Party spokesmen keep repeating that in ten years unemployment will be solved. Not even a twentieth of the unemployed persons have seen a change in their status during the last ten months anyway ! What human or divine rights will these people partake of on the basis of our pious prophecies ? Are we contemplating an alternative system in which unemployment will have no place or do we mean to erase the blot of unemployment through some skilful patch-work ? It is not the former ; if the latter, one can't be too hopeful.

Article 26 (1) of the Universal Declaration declares that "everyone has the right to education. Education shall be free, at least in the elementary and fundamental stages. Elementary education shall be compulsory". The cruel joke of it all in our context is by and large common knowledge. It is not entirely a cynical remark to say that our compulsory education is neither compulsory nor very much of an education. The elitist orientation of our educational system will be clear if we look at the percentage of growth of enrolment in schools and colleges during the last decade and also the percentage of expenditure on the two sectors in the sphere of education. There are some states in our country with about 70 per cent illiteracy where more money is spent on higher education than on elementary education. A unique way of conserving human rights really ! Gunnar Myrdal summed up this curious phenomenon thus : "Much education in underdeveloped countries, following the pattern of colonial times, and fashioned to serve the interests of the metropolitan power and the upper and middle classes that were privileged under its reign, is frankly anti-developmental, particularly because it makes the educated

unwilling to soil their hands. All governments eagerly expressed as their primary goal to stamp out illiteracy within a short time. What has actually happened is, however, that usually University Education has increased most rapidly and high school education next, while primary education has lagged—this in spite of the fact that tertiary schooling, and secondary schooling, in turn, are some 3-4 times more expensive than primary schooling". (The Human Dimensions of Economic Growth in **People's Action**, March 1973, p. 16). How do we explain all this? Could it be that Engels anticipated the question and provided the answer when he said that "the bourgeoisie has little to hope, and much to fear, from the education of the working class"? (The Condition of the working Class in England, p-150).

This is one part of the story only; the other part consists in the dubious role that is assigned to education and the manner in which it is used as an instrument for perpetuating inequalities and antagonisms. The imperialist penetration into the educational system of developing countries has played havoc by portraying the myth of the superiority of the capitalist system over others in pleasing colours. In all events, human rights are the casualty.

A close look at the international order is not possible here despite its great importance for the consolidation or otherwise of human rights. The current situation is epitomised by Leo Tolstoy most eminently in an epigram: "I sit on a man's back choking him and making him carry me and yet I assure myself and others that I am sorry for him and wish to lighten his load by all possible means except by getting off his back" (Reproduced in **Sechaba**, Vol. 10, No. 2, p. 12). Replace 'man' by 'country' and 'I' by 'the imperialist powers' and you have an accurate picture of the international order. At the 1975 session of the U.N. General Assembly the then foreign minister of India urged that "the **status quo** should change in the direction

of new and equitable economic order "to which the thundering U.S. delegate replied by saying that "the United States doesn't and cannot accept any implication that the world is now embarked on the establishment of something called the new international economic order". That explains why the U.S. has not affixed its signature to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights even after 29 years since its adoption ; and yet Mr. Carter is the modern messiah of human rights. May be it is his special right to be so by virtue of his unreserved support for the neutron bomb which is the very incarnation of decency, because unlike its stupid predecessors it does not destroy any valuable property but only quietly does away with some unwanted human lives !

It is worth repeating that human rights can be exercised only when we create conditions for it. Just one small, but glaring, illustration will do. Jimmy Carter, whose representative at the United Nations Security Council vetoed a resolution demanding economic sanctions against South Africa and thereby saved the blatant aggressor in South Africa symbolised by John Vorster as late as in November 1977, ought to know this. In South Africa, the government set up an inferior education system for Africans. Consequently in 1969, out of a total black school population of 2.5 million, less than 2,000 reached matriculation and no more than 200 graduated from the University (W.J. Pomeroy : **Apartheid Axis**, 1971, p. 19). And that's human rights for you ! Abetted by the champion and prophet of human rights, the president of the U.S.A. !! But that is not all. In addition, annual education expenditure per head of population averaged 422 dollars for whites, 180 for coloured and 36 for Africans (United Nations : **Apartheid and Education**, New York, 1970, p. 5). Under conditions of such total disparity, how is one to exercise one's human rights ? Jimmie Durham, Director of the International Indian Treaty Council, has reported that "in South Dakota (U.S.A.) alone we know that as many as one thousand Indians, American Indian Movement members or supporters, have been killed since the

Wounded Knee incident in 1973" (**New perspectives**, Helsinki, 5/77, p. 41). Whither human rights for these unfortunate repressed population? Luxury and concentration of wealth coexisting with mass poverty and squalor is one side of the international order; the other side consists of hypocritical and platitudinous panegyric to human rights coexisting with merciless brutality and rank exploitation. The developing countries, which constitute 70 per cent of the world's population, subsist on 30 per cent of the world's income, while providing the great proportion of the raw materials, energy and work-force contributing to the wealth of our planet, and they have been for a long time subjected to the inequitable and unjust system of international division of labour (**New Perspectives**, Special number 1977, p. 22). The trained personnel drained into the developed from developing countries is not included here. It becomes a colossal burden on the developing countries. To retain the flow through the multiples of pipelines from the developing to the imperialist countries, reigns of terror are supported and client states established. How will human rights flower out in such dreadful sands? The result is a stab in the heart of Chile, or a hundred thousand political prisoners in Indonesia, or a whole of South Africa submerged in abysmal darkness, or trading in death through massive armament sales, or destabilisation of those States which don't fall in line, or despatch of mercenary troops to countries like Angola and regular troops to countries like Vietnam, or inhuman torture and imprisonment in Iran, or a hundred other diabolical deeds. Instead of highlighting these murky and sordid affairs in the life of mankind, the "free press" moans about the alleged injustice meted out to a Solzhenitsyn or Sakharov as if that in itself constituted the essence of human rights. This is a typical case of the much talked about freedom of the press, which Bernard Shaw jestingly characterised as the freedom to suppress. The sad spectacle of today is that millions in the world have to employ their freedom of speech only for begging.

As the World Assembly of Builders of Peace, 1977, noted in its resolution on Peace and Human Rights "many important social problems remain unsolved, and human rights are being systematically trampled upon and grossly violated in many countries.

"The high level of development of present day civilisation stands out in terrifying contrast to the physical and moral sufferings of hundreds of millions of people. Half the population of our planet is suffering from hunger and malnutrition, more than 100 million people are unemployed, and hundreds of millions are illiterate.....

"There can be no democracy and freedom unless man is guaranteed such essential rights as employment, education, health protection and social security, unless all forms of discrimination based on race, nationality, language, religion, sex and social status are abolished, and unless workers, producing goods and values, participate in the administration and management of the national economy".

That is what Human Rights are all about. To use the issue of human rights as a scoring point in international political and ideological conflict is to add insult to injury. The real solution lies in the creation of a suitable new international economic order which will bring content to human rights and usher in a new beautiful world for man.

"And it is the truth that men are cruel and stupid and that they suffer themselves to be driven even to destruction by shepherds as stupid as themselves. I thought of my passion for universal justice, of my desire that all men should be free, leisured, educated, of my imaginations of a future earth peopled by human beings who should live according to reason". That was Aldous Huxley's dream (Those Barren Leaves, Penguin Classics, p. 131). He did not see it realised during

his lifetime. But will we? The world and the struggles therein will lose charm if we simply assume that it is unrealisable. Surely, "the best is yet to be".

—*Topics and Opinions*
Dec. 15, 1977

DISARMAMENT, PEACE AND EDUCATION

A grave situation obtains in the world today. The current international situation shows enough evidences to make anyone experience a sense of tension and insecurity, thanks to the mad pursuit of the imperialist powers in their quest for authority, superiority and unaffected super profits round the globe. The noted American scientist Edward Teller has repeatedly been saying that the Neutron bomb is not a menace to mankind's continued existence, that a limited nuclear war is not only feasible but that such a war could be won by the United States and its allies, and that the Pershing misssles to be stationed in Western Europe will further ensure the security of the "free world" against the alleged designs of "the menacing socialist Soviet Union". Theharrowing tales from EI Salvador, South Atrica, Lebanon, etc., do not seem to rattle him and his likes. What is wanting in such a crazy outlook is the humanist approach and concern.

Three major events shook the world after the end of the second world war which saw the emergence of the cold war spirit with a vengeance. They were the Korean, Suez and Vietnamese engagements. The claws of imperialism which were bared then have not been withdrawn yet. If anything, we see them in a more threatening and cynical form. The threat manifests itself in the form of ever inoreasing dangers to peace, freedom and independent development as evidenced by the military aggression on free Angola by the South African army, the ruthless killings in the refugee camps of the Palestinians in Lebanon by the Israeli army, the butchery of people in EI Salvador by the military junta, the machinations

behind the support for those who under the Pol Pot regime in Kampuchea made a massacre of the millions, and so on. It is not just a coincidence that behind all these events is to be seen the hand of the government of the United States of America. The cynicism stems from the fact that this same imperialist power declares day in and day out that it is wedded to the idea of human rights being cherished and protected in all the countries.

The question of disarmament and peace has to by viewed in this background if one has to make a realistic assessment of the situation. There is a joke that if all the accumulated records of the disarmament conference in Geneva were to be dumped into the Geneva lake there would be no Geneva lake anymore. So extensive are the proceedings of the UN-disarmament conference over the years. But little has been achieved so far in concrete terms. Why ? The reason is simple. Disarmament is tied up with the role of imperialism in the world and no unilateral disarmament may be expected to be declared by the socialist countries. To expect this would be as unreasonable as to expect the state to wither away in the communist countries when the threat to the very existence of socialism is still a reality today. Marx was no romantic dreamer to fancy that the state would wither away, much less that it should, in the face of imperialist threats. It is only natural that socialism should stand firmly arraigned against all diabolical manipulations of the imperialist war machinery and discharge its duty towards itself and humanity by countering the moves of imperialism. To those who wish the Socialist State to wither away, people in Bonn, Washington, New York, London, Amsterdam, Paris, Delhi, Berlin and Moscow have given the reply through their huge demonstrations during recent times. It is now realised that while people are all for peace they are aware that they cannot have their objectives realised when imperialism continues to have the stranglehold on many parts of the world. A report from western sources about the London Hyde Park demonstration said that the slogans raised

were in demand of disarmament on all sides, but the c iticism was specially reserved for U. S. policies in Europe.

It is a facile thing to speak of the "two super powers" being equally responsible for the current crisis and to address homilies to both of them and call upon them to abjure warlike designs. But that would not amount to a correct appreciation of the real source of current tensions and the fight for justice and genuine peace. Peace under conditions of oppression must needs be untenable. There is always something like antecedent and consequence even in relation to international events. They should be clearly understood and evaluated if lasting solutions are to be obtained. Here is the testimony of Brigadier General (Retired) Michael Harbottle of Great Britain which might help us to understand things in the right perspective : "It strikes me as useful to judge every political and military decision made with the western military alliance by the final document of the UN special assembly. We might constantly remind the politicians concerned of at least the moral obligations involved in signing such documents.... I firmly believe that under present conditions there is no longer any security for nations from each other but only with each other. By this I mean that an excess of armaments will always lead to counter reactions which result from fear and mutual distrust and in the end reduce the opportunities available for preserving peace. Allow me to point out an absurd fact. At a time when over 500,000 million dollars are thrown away every year for military purposes, the budget for the Arms Control and Disarmament Agency in the leading western nation, the USA, is not even as much as that provided for its military bands, and this institution which was set up to implement the resolutions of the UN Special Session does not even exist in other countries. The arms trade is a highly profitable business in the USA for certain politically influential groups in the military industrial complex. In the socialist economy of the Soviet Union, arms expenditure is to a certain extent a necessary evil. Nobody can profit from it and it

only slows down the development of other sectors of the economy". Introducing the discussion at the 1981 World Trade Union Conference on Social and Economic aspects of disarmament, James Milne, General Secretary of the Scottish TUC, argued that "expenditure on armament constitutes a scandalous waste of human and material resources. While millions of people are perishing from hunger, thirst and diseases, more money continues to be invested in the production of deadly weapons." In his contribution at the same conference Alexander Subbotin, of the Central Council of Soviet Trade Unions, submitted that the arms race imposed by the USA imperialists and NATO was forcing the socialist states also to allocate large sums to military expenditure, wasting valuable resources which could be used more constructively to provide for the constantly increasing material and cultural requirements of the working population. The Secretariat of the World Federation of Teachers' Unions (FISE) in its statement before the conference said among other things that "the expenditure on armament constitutes an enormous wastage of material and human resources which could find better use in favour of economic and cultural development and of social progress. In 1980 they amounted to 500 thousand million dollars. This is also twice as much as the total expenditure on public health." The statement added that "the reasons for the arms race should be sought in imperialism, colonialism, neocolonialism, apartheid, foreign occupation and other forms of oppression. The countries which pursue this policy heat up the arms race to maintain their domination, their economic and political control and their exploitation of other countries. The struggle for disarmament should also be linked with the struggle for change of the present economic order in which the majority of mankind is the subject of misery and underdevelopment. The struggle for just and equal economic relations forms part of the responsibilities of the trade union movement." The Conference itself in its declaration said that "as a result of military preparations, society is throwing away the possibility of creating material and other goods, to a value much

greater than the total truly astronomical military expenditures of the modern world. In evaluating the negative aspects of the arms race, one should also take into consideration the possibilities lost in this way."

In a speech he made on his religious beliefs in Toronto in 1968, the former Secretary General of the United Nations, U Thant, had said : "The law of love and compassion for all living creatures is again a doctrine to which we are all too ready to pay lip service. However, if it is to become a reality, it requires a process of education, a veritable mental renaissance. Once it has become a reality, national as well as international problems will fall into perspective and become easier to solve. Wars and conflicts, too, will then become a thing of the past, because wars begin in the minds of man, and in those minds love and campassion would have built the defence of peace." Much the same was pronounced by L. I. Brezhnev in his report to the 26th congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union : "Not war preparations that doom peoples to a senseless squandering of their material and spiritual wealth, but consolidation of peace.—That is the clue to the future." It is in this context heartening to note that the main slogan in Europe during the protest marches against the menace of the neutron bomb has been that "peace is everybody's business." And yet not a single day passes without some high dignitary of the government of the USA proclaiming that the designs of the Soviet Union are at the root of the current international tensions. As early as in March 1946, J. D. Bernal, the noted British physicist and champion of peace, analysed in his lecture on the "Challenge of our Time" the social responsibility of science in the aftermath of the second world war which had ended with the employment of the nnclear arsenal in the process of smashing the fascist s t a t e machine and posed the all important question, "What are we afraid of now ?" He answered the question thus: "The atom bomb, of course : this horrible new product of science which multiplies the destruction of which we have had a small foretaste in our

blitzed towns. But the atom bomb does not make itself or blow itself up. The real danger lies in the creation of a world situation which might allow and even force statesmen to order its use. And why is there this danger ? Because, we are told, of the attitude of the Soviet Union ; the people who, by the sacrifice of twenty million of their brothers and sisters, saved us from any commensurate sacrifice ; the people now bent on repairing destruction of which we in this country have but a faint experience....The real danger does not come from the Soviet Union, or the atom bomb, or from the inherent wickedness of man, or from our intrinsic inability to cooperate in building a new world based on common effort for common good.It comes from those who do not want this kind of a world: those who have discovered the special values of 'western civilization', the defence of which we can now take up from the defeated Germans. These are the enemies of promise : these are the real heirs of the Nazis. Unless we can stop them from splitting the world into two camps in men's minds, the fatal division will grow and war will be inevitable."

A more incisive and cryptic indictment of the cult generated by Winston Churchill's Fulton speech is not possible. The cult, if anything, has only become more intense in its practice over the decades and its manifestations are obvious in the crazy notions about a limited nuclear war or a rapid deployment force or refusal to respond positively to the offer of the Soviet Union not to be the first to employ the nuclear weapons. It is a happy sign that during this fiftieth year of the rise to power of Adolf Hitler, even the former Defence secretary of the USA, Robert Mcnamara, has given a call to the USA to respond to the Soviet offer by committing itself to a similar stand. The reality of the present day situation, as pointed out earlier, is that imperialist intimidation of the national liberation struggles, as in Nicaragua, El Salvador, Namibia, etc., is more than manifest. Added to that is the clandestine effort of imperialism to have several underdeveloped countries exist like client states or face the threat of destabilisation.

The infamous Chilean atrocity that US imperialism engineered is still fresh in the memory of the world. For what purpose does imperialism arm to the teeth such countries as South Africa, Israel, and so on ? To ensure that freedom is not subverted or for ensuring that the freedom to plunder is not questioned ? What has imperialism to say about the denial of rights to peoples of a whole country like Palestine ? All these are antecedents, the consequence of which is that outside the imperialist block there results a distortion of priorities in the pattern of spending the limited resources that they have. Sometimes, the pattern of spending is prescribed by US imperialism in the name of countering the allegedly increasing communist threat while in reality it acts only as a drain on the scanty resources of the c o u n t r y concerned or if the resources are not quite scanty at least in the quelling of the democratic movements in those countries. The classic instances of today are Saudi Arabia spending about 8.5 billion dollars for a colossal military build up with sophisticated US military wares apparently with the intention of meeting the Israeli threat, but in reality adding to the burden of misery of the ordinary Saudi Arabian citizen, and Pakistan spending about 3million dollars to meet the 'Soviet threat' if anyone believes that such a threat exists and that Pakistan can really avert the threat with its millitary build up, were a threat real. These and other similar countries will continue to perpetuate illiteracy, disease, poverty and squalor while doing a lot to 'defend' themselves against 'communism'. There could not be a greater blasphemy that imperialism might be responsible for. It is for this reason that it is described as a trader in death.

In the circumstances, the socialist countries will also have to spend heavily on defence preparations and defence support against imperialism, or else perish in the face of the ever aggressive imperialism. Diversion of funds towards wasteful expenditure like this is forced upon the socialist world by imperialism which gleefully watches the scene as many developmental projects which might have been executed in the

socialist countries get blocked. The situation is equally tragic in developing countries like India which earmark huge funds for defence preparations with a lot of reluctance, but inevitably. The magnitude of disortions in economy resulting Therefrom could be appreciated if one realises what alternative developmental projects could have been undertaken and fulfilled, had the burden of defence expenditure been not forced on us as at present. The total spending on defence by India during 1980-81 was to the tune of Rs. 4200 crores. Suppose we could spend the same amount on developmental schemes, what might we have achieved? With that amount we could have constructed sixteen crores of houses containing a room and other amenities. The houseless in the country would then be quite marginal, perhaps. Or, take the Jaguar deal. Each one of them costs Rs. 8 crores, an amount which is sufficient to supply note books to five crores of children in the schools of the country at the rate of two each to a student. A submarine is said to cost Rs. 108 crores, an amount which would be enough to provide drinking water facilities in some two hundred thousand villages of the country, and there are more than that number of villages with no drinking water wells yet in the country, Or, take the tanks, five of which cost Rs. 25 crores, an amount with which we could build primary schools in some twenty-five thousand villages or more. We are spending some three hundred crores of rupees every year on repairs for every eight hundred aircraft of the air force, an amount equivalent to the cost of ten lakh tons of wheat and calculate the number of mouths that could have been fed with that much of wheat every year. With the amount of a hundred crores of rupees required for buying, say, a thousand jeeps and trucks for the army, we could easily buy ten thousand buses, a twentieth of which will permanently solve the transport problems of a city like Bangalore. But we cannot go in for these developmental schemes as the defence spending is an inevitable necessity today, however much strong our longing be for diverting our precious resources from wasteful channels. whether the character of the ruling class of ours would allow

for the channelising of funds the way they are envisaged here even if the defence spending could be curtailed is another question altogether. The possibility is very much real.

A close look at the happenings around India will indicate to us how precariously and perilously we are placed and how the threat of imperialist brigandage is at our very doorstep. It was the great champion of "human rights", Jimmy Carter, the then President of the USA, who first mooted the idea of a possible use of nuclear weapons in the Indian Ocean and the Persian Gulf in order to ensure the unhindered supply of whatever Carter thought was crucial for his country's economy from this and other regions. The head of the imperialist war machine declared that "any attempt by outside forces to seize control of the Persian Gulf area will be rebuffed with the use of all the necessary means including nuclear weapons". That is an extraordinary way of protecting human rights, which in the dictionary of the U.S. masters means simply the rights of the imperialist power to grab the wealth of other countries. How can one afford to forget the fact that nearly forty per cent of the total annual wealth that is generated in the U.S. economy flows into that country from outside? The fun of the matter is that the U.S. which assures us of the use of even nuclear weapons in the gulf region if outside powers were to seize control of the region does not consider itself an outsider in the same region. Which 'outside' force other than the US is operating in the gulf region at present and who has ever threatened the USA from the gulf region? And yet several warships of the U.S. with nuclear warheads on board have been permanently stationed in the Indian Ocean. This is in addition to the Diego Garcia base which has been correctly described as "the indestructible aircraft carrier of the USA" by the U.S. governmental sources themselves. The U.S. has deployed some thirty to forty warships with nuclear warheads on board permanently in the Indian Ocean alongside of the B-52 aircraft carriers in abundance. These are breathing down our neck every moment.

The immediate consequence is that there is a meaningless wastage of our resources and energy in order to meet the eventualities that might arise through some crazy action on the part of the high-ups in the USA. Take any country and you have this scourge, this pestilence, thanks to the diabolical role of imperialism which flourishes on terror, death, and misery. When a country like India is surrounded on all sides by imperialist war machinery, there is no question of India coming out successfully in an encounter if there were to be one. With our economy in shambles, we have hardly a chance against the mighty imperialist war machine. Or, that may be disproved also as it was in the context of the glorious Vietnamese struggle against US imperialism. The point to note is that what the imperialist USA wants is not war against India fought at first hand; its single purpose is to gain abject surrender from India so that it could be converted into a rich neocolonial pasture for the US multinationals to graze and so that India would be a client state of the USA.

The people round the globe, especially in Europe, know what it means to have real shoot-outs. They know what it means to have neutron bombs and Pershing and Cruise missiles stationed in their countries. That is why in several European capitals and elsewhere there have been massive demonstrations against the aggressive policy of the U.S. in the name of crushing communism and the "Soviet menace". The most remarkable among them was the one in the West German capital of Bonn where soldiers in uniform joined the demonstration in thousands. Imperialism should judge the anxiety and fear of Europe against the killer weapons at least from this factor if not from any other factor within its experience. Is it that the imperialist bosses feel a sense of defeat in the battle of ideas that they take to the battle of nerves and then to the battle with muscle-power? "Imperialism, damn you; You have stifled our spirits once fit for angels", said Mayakovsky. And it was never truer than it is today.

Now is the time for the peace forces to seize the initiative by crying a halt to the growing menace of imperialism, without which there can be no meaningful march towards disarmament. Man's highest aspiration has always been to attain a stage wherein the unfoldment of the manifold potentialities of all human beings becomes a distinct possibility. Sweet life, love, culture, and peace have been cherished by humanity through the ages. It is for us to create conditions today where Picasso's dove can fly unfettered and unobstructed so that it could 'knock at heaven's gates' like Shakespeare's lark in one of his sonnets. That is the objective to be realised through our conscious efforts after understanding the gravity of the challenge of today. Education is one of the means to achieving this end But it is not mere formal education that can enable us to face the challenge. While there is a lot of positive work that could be done through a scientific curriculum in schools and other institutions of learning by inculcating a value system that is conducive for peace and progress of humanity, there is much else to be done through informal education outside the classrooms and institutions of learning, that is, among the broad masses. Organisation of education in the underdeveloped countries has often militated against their own interest, thanks to the penetration of the imperialist cultural pattern into their educational apparatus. Literature, History, Economics, Sociology, Psychology, and Political Science are only a few of the disciplines where this penetration has led to a totally wrong emphasis from the overall point of view of peace and progress. The ultimate solution, of course, lies in radically transforming the infrastructure itself so that the superstructure might not generate or accelerate the kind of consciousness that it is presently generating and accelerating. That remains the long term perspective for education. Meanwhile, however, we owe it to ourselves and to our peoples to see that the educational apparatus

is effectively employed for disabusing the wrong consciousness that the existing infrastructure tends to create. That is the first step in our fight for peace and against the crude warmongers of our times.

—*Teachers' Movement*
Vol. 3, No. 3, February 1983

CURRENT TRENDS IN KANNADA LITERATURE

In the annals of the Kannada Literary movement March 10, 1979 stands out as a significant date as it was on that day that the first conference of the rebel writers in Kannada was held in Bangalore. Inaugurated by the Telugu poet Sri Sri this conference eclipsed in many ways the official Kannada Sahitya Sammelana of that year held in Dharmasthala, the headquarters in Karnataka of a particular brand of religious obscurantism. Delivering that year's presidential address at the conference, Gopalakrishna Adiga declared that a great need had arisen to establish an academy on the French model to correctly evaluate the vast amount of literary production in Kannada language every year. He urged that steps should be taken to ensure that literature reached the ordinary people of the State.

Less conspicuous in paraphernalia and fanfare, the rebel literary conference (Bandaya Sahitya Sammelan) in Bangalore was attended by fewer people who were out to discuss a manifesto which began with the words: "This is an age of earth-shaking events. Even cosy cottages are rattling; what then to speak of the ivory towers of poets ?"

The manifesto said that "recent happenings in the country have demonstrated that there are two worlds in our literature; one of the writers who respond to contemporary life and struggle for changing it, and the other of those who fail to recognise this contemporaneity in the day-to-day occurrences of life and who remain floating in their self-created illusions. The latter turn a blind eye to all the horrors around them, the shootings by police and the army mass killings, murder of

the oppressed, the bizarre dance of various forms of exploitation, and the destruction of democracy. They are continuing their efforts to construct their own icy mansions in the midst of the fiery ocean."

The other group of writers, the manifesto averred, was committed to the task of fighting against all manifestations of violence and for the defence and extension of democracy. The manifesto drew a distinction between the "master culture" presently in existence and the culture that the rebel writers envisage. Finally, the manifesto took care to emphasise that literature cannot be reduced to the level of mere propaganda and that any great work of art takes birth only when it embodies within itself a pervasive vision of life after transcending the immediacy of political strife.

The conference held symposia on a variety of topics like 'exploitation and the writer', 'the writer's responsibility', 'the form of democracy and the writer', 'the writer in the Indian rural world', 'rebel literature : ideology and organisation', 'literature and contemporaneity', 'criticism and ideological struggle', 'reactionary stances in literary criticism', 'literature and pro-people stand', 'nature of the visual arts', 'perspective for the rebel theatre', and so on. The two-day conference succeeded in a great measure in finding a genuine and solid intellectual and ideological basis for the practice of its doctrine in the cultural genres.

Milton declared that he wrote Paradise Lost "to justify the ways of God to Man." It is not infrequently that we find men in the literary and philosophical world writing and preaching in order to justify the existing order to contemporary society. This applies to the present as much as it does to the past. The broad question of the attitude towards the past, including the creative arts of the earlier periods, is one which has constantly been the preoccupation of the critics and connaisseurs of every generation. Rebel movements often

display a tendency towards rejecting the past outright when actually a revaluation of the past to assess its relevance for the present is what is required. In the process, naturally, one identifies the aspirations of different sections of the community highlighted in the literature of the past. Historically what section of society created it and to disseminate what social philosophy could be established with a fair measure of certainty therefrom.

Besides tackling this ticklish question, the Kannada rebel writers' conference of 1979 addressed itself to another crucial question, namely, the role of form in literature. What metaphor and imagery an author employs could well be an indication of his predilections in the context of the conflicts and challenges of life. Someone like Eliot may be alarmed by seeing London Bridge falling, while a poet like Neruda may see

> The whole earth reeking of heaven,
> And heavenly merchandise.
> — **(Religion in the East)**
> Or, he may
> See the ancient being, the slave, the sleeping one,
> Blanket his fields—a body, a thousand bodies, a man, a thousand
> Women swept by the sable whirlwind, charred with rain and night,
> Stoned with a leaden weight of statuary.
> — **(The Heights of Macchu Picchu)**

The intensity and genuineness or otherwise of experience communicated in poetry is always an eluding question. It is rather difficult to come to grips with this question. The consequence of this in the specific context of contemporary Kannada literary movement has been a near dogmatic insistence

that the agony and wretchedness of the oppressed can be meaningfully communicated only by one who is actually oppressed in his or her own personal life. This is extended to mean that those belonging to the oppressed castes alone could be authentic representatives of the sensibilities of the oppressed people in literature. The depth of experience is no longer rated as the source of expression of sensibilities, but being born in an oppressed caste group is considered as the vital need for the expression of a certain set of sensibilities. No less a person than Dr. U. R. Anantha Murthy came up with enunciation at the Dharmasthala official conference.

This leads to the differentiation between the so-called 'Brahmin literature' and the Dalith literature based not so much on the content of literature as on what caste group a writer belongs to, it being presumed that outgrowing caste consciousness is a near impossibility. It is one thing to speak of the Brahmanical element in a given work of literature and quite another to speak of the value of a work of a writer who incidentally might have taken birth in a Brahmin family. If it is presumed that a Brahmin writer perforce creates Brahmanical literature only, it amounts to denying the possibility of new sensibilities being instilled in a person through experience. Birth would determine everything in that case ; consciousness would then determine being and not the other way round.

Secondly, it would also discount any possibility of others' experience communicated in literature having any influence on the readers in general. Even the best Dalith literature would in this theory be quite irrelevant for a non-Dalith, for he is assumed to have a typified sensibility and response innate in himself and unchangeable. The inescapable dilemma that this theory presents is that Dalith literature is irrelevant for both the Dalith and the non-Dalith ; for the Dalith because he has in any case already that sensibility associated with him inherentlly, and for the non-Dalith because he cannot come under its

influence at all. This applies equally well to literature with the Brahmanical tinge, too.

The rebel literary movement had to reject this pernicious doctrine if its slogan that literature should be transformed into a powerful weapon for change had to be realised. A close analysis reveals the fact that that theory is advanced in all seriousness by those who are averse to the concept of class consciousness. They are not prepared to perceive class ramifications for what they are and they seem to derive some vicarious satisfaction in weaning the Daliths away from the mainstream of democratic struggles and in pushing them into a futile sectarian path. It is precisely against this untoward development that the rebel literary movement in Kannada started its virulent battle at the time of the 1979 Bangalore conference. This it did by rejecting the fanciful theory that personality and poetic sensibility are embedded invariably in one's consciousness in a typical immutable way by reason of birth itself.

It also offered a sound theoretical foundation for rebel literature by defining its objective in a twofold way : to rouse the consciousness of the oppressed, and to enrage the traditional pundits and orthodox believers, the apologists for the status quo. A call was given to expose their vily tricks and to reject their romanticism and fatalism. Needless to say that the perverted theory of "art for art's sake" with its consequential raw aestheticism was also thrown overboard.

This should not be taken to mean that the field has now been cleared for a more purposeful creativity in the literary sphere for the simple reason that the perspective outlined by the rebel conference was not universally accepted then. Nor is it universally accepted now. There are those who pooh-pooh this trend as an infantile, immature, non-literary but political outlook. But there are others who give credence to the theory, but demand better understanding in its practice. Their

misplaced apprehension is that with the acceptance of the theory of the rebel movement, literature might end up as sheer propaganda and slogan-mongering. It is misplaced because the rebel movement has never sacrificed artistry, uniqueness of experience, and artistic conscience in favour of any prosaic or inane political propaganda in literature.

Another of their fears is that this new approach might mean the treasurehouse of the past being consigned to the dustbin of history. This fear is also baseless because the rebel movement does not pretend that the rebellious trend is a special prerogative of the present t i m e s only. All that it seeks to do is to revalue the past, cherish the glorious result of rebellions gone through in the past and bury the unwholesome traits of the past.

In contemporary Kannada literature there are four major phases clearly discernible : the romantic called the 'navodaya' movement ; the progressive or the '**pragathisheela**' movement ; the modern or the 'navya' movement ; and the rebel or 'bandaya' movement. The 'navodaya' phase was heralded by B M Sreekantaiah with his translations from English poetry. New original creations in Kannada soon followed in the wake of volume this. K V Puttappa, D R Bendre, K S Narasimha Swamy, P T Narasimhachar and Masti Venkatesha Iyengar enriched Kannada poetry during this phase. Professor B M Sree had chosen the poetry of love and patriotism, besides poetry dealing with the love of nature for his translations from the English poetry of the nineteenth century.... There was hardly any poem with a pronounced social theme in his selections ; nor was there any poem from the range of contemporary English poetry. Even a poem like "England My England" offered itself for selection but none of the poems of the period of World War I. There were new innovations in the lyrical style under the English influence. Literary critcism of this period developed in two ways, first in defending the new patterns and secondly in explanatory explorations into the

literature of earlier periods. Inculcation of a fresh and broad, if not also incisive, outlook towards life and innovations of new forms in a more lively language are the two signal features of the literature of this period. The compulsive force of Sanskritic influence was still highly operative in spite of conscious efforts to overcome this influence on the part of most of the writers of the period.

But poets like Bendre and Puttappa infused social themes also into this new poetry, the like of which was simply unheard of in Kannada till the twentieth century. **Annavatara** and **Narabali** of Bendre set a trend until then unknown and this consisted of a virile attack on poverty stemming from rank exploitation.... Still employing an ornate language characteristic of an earlier period, K. V. Puttappa (Kuvempu, a national poet) focussed attention on several social maladies without always going to the socio-economic roots of these malcontents rocking society. Anti-priestly class sentiments also came to be vigorously sounded in his poems like **Pujari** (Priest) and **Devaru** (God). He traced almost every form of ignorance to the stranglehold that the priestly class had on society. In a poem entitled **Kalki**, he foresaw the dawn of a new era, but only by providing ultra-romantic solutions to the social evils. His novels of this period are no less romantic in conception although his **Kanuru Heggadithi** opens a new chapter in the history of Kannada novels. There is an abundant sprinkling of the sentiment of regionalism also in his poetry of this period.

Gopalakrishna Adiga appeared on the scene during this period with his love poetry and also poetry with the fervour for the creation of a new fine dreamland. Narasimha Swamy confined himself to love and domestic happiness in his poetry while Narasimhachar portrayed tradition and transcendentalism in a new light in his musical poetry.

The 1940's witnessed a somewhat sporadic and emotional

outburst through the progressive literary movement, the germs of which were already visible in the 'navodaya' poetry dealing with social themes.... This movement did not always emerge from any process of deep analysis and theory of the socio-economic dynamics of society. This, by the way, accounts for its limitations and aberrations as well. The poetry of this period is marked by the continuation of the trends of the earlier 'navodaya' phase; only it becomes more pervasive and typical. It is in the sphere of the novel that progressivism manifests itself in a more concrete fashion.

Among the diseases eating away at the vitals of society, the horrid tale of prostitution claims the utmost attention of novelists led by A. N. Krishna Rao and T. R. Subba Rao. There are sex themes galore to illustrate the pestilence that the institution of prostitution is. Krishna Rao (better known as Aa. Naa. Kru) even wrote a treatise on literature and sex to make his point about what constitutes the progressive outlook in literature. In some of his other novels depicting the ills of society he is quite Dickensian in approach insofar as he anticipates solutions through noble-minded philanthropic individuals, very much as in some of the popular films of even the 1970's.

Niranjana and Basavaraja Kattimani were, however, different as novelists in that they concentrated attention on the socio-economic realities breaeing injustice, exploitation, poverty, deprivation and discrimination. A considerably penetrative objective analysis of society is their forte, more so in the case of Niranjana than in the case of Kattimani. It was Niranjana who immortalised the heroes of the Kayyur peasant revolt in his novel Chirasmarane. Kattimani launched a powerful tirade on Mutts and Mahants, the bulwark of arch reaction and obscurantism.

Short stories belonging to this category also appeared in several collections of many writers. Notwithstanding all this,

however, the movement proved to be shortlived as it paled into insignificance by 1952-53, the years in which the spirited voice of Gopalakriahna Adiga of 1946-48 found articulation in tones of despair, frustration and downright fantasy of revivalism garbed in modernity.

The single biggest weakness of the progressive literary movement was that the writers who shone on the firmament brilliantly for some time were for the most part outside mass struggles, with the result that most of their work was accomplished mainly at the intellectual level thematically. Some of them were not even aware of the real objective conditions existing in society. They expected a radical change in society, a transformation in the relations between individuals and individual groups in society to take place any moment, thus indicating that they remained at the periphery only. Some of them saw a revolution round the corner for no other reason than that they intellectually felt a need for it. Not being direct and active participants in bringing about a revolution for which they felt an urge, soon they could stage an 'volte face' through quick somersaults. Even Niranjana, easily the most remarkable among the Marxist writers of the early 50's, expressed the view in the late 60's that Marxism had fettered him in his literary creativity. The 'unfetterd' Niranjana, it must be said, has produced nothing to equal his works of the 'period of bondage to Marxism'. In the latter part of the 70's he perambulated back to progressivism through his novel **Mrithyunjaya**

Certain other poets and novelists in whose works traces of progressivism were quite rich during the phase of the progressive literary movement veered round to subjectivism and rank individualism during the next phase. Some of them, like Adiga, shunned their past commitment, cursed their 'intellectual banality' of the earlier period, and embraced sophisticated versions of tradition and revivalism. Another intriguing thing about this pioneering poet of the later 'navya' school is

that he thundered most volubly about the tasks ahead for free India, stressed the determination with which the ugly system of caste had to be eradicated, and proclaimed the dawn of the millennium. His poem **Kattuvevu Navu** is a visionary's inspiring programme. How the tasks had to be fulfilled and what obstructions there were on the path did not bother him. He couldn't care less for such trivial issues when he wanted paradise to descend on earth instantaneously, albeit without his direct involvement. Within a short period of less than five years, the poet was already definite that all such aspirations were wild dreams, that ideals were reckless dreams, and also that ideals were millstones round the necks of individuals, and that economic emancipation is either a mirage or of a secondary importance. The warmth of the shell of tradition and 'high culture' must have been irresistibly inviting for one with this frame of mind.

One remarkable author of eminence who remains untainted by these and the forthcoming currents and whose evolution has a style of its own is Shivarama Karantha. There is no intellectual and cultural field with which he has not dabbled and to which he has not made some lasting contribution. Rationalism and individualism are his core attributes and sometimes one and at other times the other comes to the fore in his works. He actively threw himself into the anti-colonial struggle prior to 1947 and tore to the shreds many feudal institutions and ideas. No creative writer in Kannada has fumed at superstition so energetically as he has done. Thus his early novels are replete with thoughts which could be the despair of any progressive writer. But the same Karanth espouses private enterprise and unbridled capitalist freedom most passionately in his later novels and spits fire at the mere mention of the working class, trade unions, land reforms and socialism. Presently he is the very image of dejection, especially because the politics of today maddens him. But he continues to be the most ardent champion of scientific temper, though paradoxically enough he abhors the science of society as an impossible

myth. To say the least, he is a phenomenon in contemporary Kannada literature.

At a time when the progressive literary movement was gradually wearing itself out, Dr. V. K. Gokak, himself a poet, novelist, critic and English Professor, expounded the thesis that Kannada poetry cried for a new form and that anything could be expressed in the modernist way. Others, notably Adiga, supplemented this with the view that life in the modern age had suddenly gone complex and that, therefore, poetry could not remain as it used to be. Form and content had both to be imbued with complexity. How exactly life displayed its complexity and how it had grown complex at that particular juncture were not questions to be asked by serious students of poetry, especially if they had been studiously following developments in the field of English poetry.

The aftermath of industrialisation, World War II, alienation, angst (of the existentialist school), fragmentation of society and lack of communication resulting therefrom, etc., had all to be subsumed in Kannada poetry also if only because most of the Kannada poets of the mid 50's and thereafter had their intellectual roots in English poetry. Kannada poetry thus had the strange predicament of getting embellished (or tarnished, as the case may be) with moods, experiences, and expressions born in the English and European millieux and imported into the creative minds of Kannada poets who only physically lived in the atmosphere of Karnataka.

Alienation may be felt deeply by a sensitive individual in India even today but not for reasons identical with those generating that feeling in, say, the United States or France or Britain. Salinger's Holden Caulfied, Kafka, Camus, and Sartre nevertheless invade the Kannada literary world in a big way in all robustness and take the field by a storm. There is the picture of 'absurdity of life' also thrown in, especially in the sphere of drama. Such dramas many times become literally

absurd instead of being only technically 'absurd'. It is only latterly that the spate of absurd dramas has stopped in the Kannada world.

The irony of the situation is that this is an absolute reversal of the Wordsworthian method excepting with respect to the usage of language (and it is sacrilege to think of the anachronistic Wordsworth while discussing modernity in modern literature, they might say). But the fact is that Wordsworth devised a new form and injected new content into his poetry in order to reach more people than his immediate predecessors did.

The phase of modernity in Kannada literature had the opposite effect. A new form there was, and new context, too; but poetry with this new texture was only still farther removed from the masses, their experiences, and expressions. It was prescribed as a duty for the connaisseur to rise to that complexity if he wanted to 'appreciate' poetry. The French symbolists also were unsparingly used to heighten the effect of poetry during this phase. It was a fantastic world of make-believe, to put it very mildy, and brazen-faced imitation literature, to put it very bluntly. Profundity appeared to be the hall-mark of this poetry of modernism but it could be meaningful only for a narrow circle of professional critics and students of poetry. It was elitist in every sense.

Poets like Puttappa, Bendre and Narasimhachar remained untouched by the new sweeping current. Puttappa continued in his old vein and repeated himself untiringly in poetry, while the other two took to more metaphysical aspects. But the best part of their poetic career belongs to the premodernist period. The school of modernism itself began to flow in two streams, one represented by Adiga and Narasimha Swamy and the other by A. K. Ramanujan and B. C. Ramachandra Sharma who were (and are) living in the United States and elsewhere outside India. The other poets fitted themselves into either of

the camps and displayed their modernity and obscurity confidently under the wings of the ace theoreticians of modernism. Professors Chandrashekhara Patil and Lankesh needed no such protective wings as they could themselves expound profound theories. Adiga proceeded along the path of contriving mythological imagery with a modernist purpose after consciously outgrowing his past and argued vehemently that modern man (in Karnataka that is) has tended to become rootless in tradition and hence groping in darkness out of despair.

The other school found its votaries vying with each other in introducing baffling and deeply personalised experiences through sex symbols and the like. Both the branches believed that expression in poetry could not be simple as complex feelings were being communicated. They could not hold the audience in view as the complexity of experience defied simplicity of expression. This phase which may be said to have begun in its fullest form in 1956 with the publication of 'Bhumigeetha' by Adiga continued unabated for full two decades. We have a few adherents of this school in our midst even now although Adiga is no longer the leader of the group of these writers today.

The school of modernism had its success, too, thanks to Adiga and Narasimha Swamy, the latter still exploring problems of the individual. The worst flaw of the poets of this school was that they allowed themselves to be carried away by spurious experiences and conflicts of personality. Maladjustment in the family as a consequence of the 'generation gap' could well be looked upon as an irresolvable crisis in a young man's life in this scheme. A city-trained graduate returning to his village (yes, in literature they do return, after all) experienced deep alienation, as these writers portrayed it. In short, the poets wilfully dissociated themselves from problems and conflicts which were real and the terse form they employed made the escape swifter and smoother. One

amusing, and to me an inexplicable, enigma is that some of these 'modern' poets began to write under pseudonyms and they invariably chose female names. (I am not aware of any modern woman poet writing under a male name).

The short story is relatively free from such eccentricities and complexities although a few writers made bold attempts to make it go the way of poetry. Anantha Murthy, Purnachandra Tejaswi, Sadashiva, and K. V. Rajagopal are among those who proved effective without losing the roots and relevance. If there is any social criticism of life abounding in literature of this period, it is primarily in the short story form. Magazines, big and small, have played their role commendably as vehicles of communication through this literary form during the last two decades.

Anantha Murthy (Samskara), Lankesh (Biruku), Shanthinatha Desai, Yeshawantha Chittala, and a few others introduced Kafka, Camus, and what have you to the Kannada audience through their novels while depicting the crises in Indian society. A writer who adapted folk style for his works of modernism, both in poetry and drama, is Chandrashekara Kambara, according to whom contemporary life stinks and makes you sore. Solutions seem to be nowhere in sight for this none too analytical author.

Strange as it might seem, it is nevertheless true that some 'navodaya' writers had discussed more social themes than the modernists did. For instance, Bendre had a beautiful and moving poem on widowhood during an earlier epoch, but the modernists had no time or p a t i e n c e for such feelings and expressions, preoccupied as they were with extreme individualism. Their value system varies from the one which the 'navodaya' writers professed. (In practice, however, this made very little difference as neither group had any integrated approach towards the mass of people).

Literary criticism of the modernist phase takes a new shape to answer to the needs of creative writers of this period. A new complex language of criticism is evolved for the purpose. Criticism gets steeped in scholasticism as much as poetry does. Values are not adjudged with social goals as the yardstick and experiences are not subjected to close analysis. A search for 'ambiguity' (Empson's term) is relentlessly pursued. It is interesting to note that the noted writers of this period are also noted critics of the period. Clubs of mutual criticism (and recrimination) come into being. Journals ara filled with these acclamations and disputes. When other journals don't suffice, they start their own journals for a small circle of fervent admirers and critics. (This trend is at its best in 1981 when four new literary journals have taken birth already and more are in the offing). The long and short of it all is that the modernist phase found literature circumscribed within the narrow walls of highbrow intellectualism and exaggerated individualism and thus appealed only to a restricted audience. If it is not too harsh a remark, it might well be urged that while attempting to portray alienation in their works the modernists triumphed only in alienating themselves from the people.

The vacuum during this period has been filled by some popular authors like Triveni, Indira, Parvathavani, Krishnamurthy Puranika, S. L. Byrappa, Inamdar and a host of others. All literary forms are equally utilised by these writers. The middle class house-wife and the average middle class worker find in them a solace and even an unfortunate guide. The writers are not necessarily mediocre as evidenced best by Triveni, for example. But the content of these works is stereotyped. It is an unending parody of oneself that some of these writers indulge in. Fatalism, 'deux ex machina', compassion, goodness, villainy, harmonious domestic and collective life, are all delineated very pleasingly in these works. Glamour, shock, pity, triumph of good over evil (so unlike as in real life today where the evils man thrives as

the others suffer in silence) and the like are stock in trade for these authors. They are not pace-setters in the field of literature but they are the writers who reach a vast audience in a State where the percentage of literacy is about equal to the national average.

It is in this background that the rebel literary movement is to be viewed as the current phase in the Kannada literary scene. The progressive literary movement which had quit the scene in the mid 50's was revived in the mid 70's as a corollary to the creative work of several writers of the younger generation who voiced protest against modernism in literature and demanded radical changes in the social fabric. This became part of the all-India progressive writers' movement under the banner of 'Pragathi Pantha' and held three state level conferences in successive years and brought progressive writers of all hues on the same platform for dialogue and exchange of experiences in the struggle for a better socio-cultural life for the people. The 'pragathi pantha' was more the consummation of the then already existing trends against the modernist current than an organisation created to counter the aberrations of modernism. This paved the way for the more comprehensive rebel literary movement which had its state level conferences twice in 1979 and 1980. The 1981 conference is due in september.

In Karnataka it is the Kannada Sahithya Parishad that is the recipient of official patronage. The rebel writers have snapped all links with this body as a matter of principle. Munificent state grants are utilised bythis body to hold annual conferences where scholars are invited to vivisect the new paths blazed by the new writers, if any. More often than not these conferences end up as jamborees where pious declarations are made about the status of Kannada by the Chief Minister and others. Some years ago a thousand and odd delegates went for a jaunt in Delhi where the conference was held and in 1982 a world Kannada conference is to be held in Mysore at a

cost of a few crores of rupees. One is legitimately sceptical about the usefulness of such shows.

But the 1981 official conference held in March in Chickmagalur produced some fireworks when Dr. S. L. Byrappa, an important novelist, castigated a few leading modernist luminaries and charged them with naked plagiarism. He suggested that the English professors writing in Kannada under the modernist garb were taking advantage of the ignorance of the majority of readers about the latest trends in European literature and were showing themselves off as original writers by adapting the techniques of those European poets and novelists. In other words, they simply palm off second hand stuff. Byrappa quoted chapter and verse to prove his point and stunned the votaries of modernism to some extent by revealing that some prominent poets and short story writers of this category had only translated some European sources into Kannada and had shamelessly concealed the originals.

On the other side it is pointed out that Shakespeare and Kalidasa also borrowed and so on. This sounds unconvincing in the face of blatant plagiarism that Dr. U. R. Anantha Murthy has resorted to for his short story entitled 'Mouni' the original for which it is alleged is Barnard Malmud's 'Mourners'. Ramachandra Deva, a working journalist, has palmed off a poemas his own when in reality it is alleged to beonly a translation of a Yugoslav poet. Tejaswi and Lankesh are also charged with similar guilt. It is astounding that these renowned authors failed to acknowledge the inspiration they received from others at least in a foot-note.

What is even more astounding is that it took thirty years for our critics to realise that the roots of the modernist tree of poetry lay elsewhere than in Karnataka. When the whole background of atmosphere, theme and form is concocted in the brains of the 'poets' on the European model and something passes for poetry even after that, plagiarism in isolated con-

texts must needs be judged as inconsequential. And that is the worst indictment of the modernist phase. The whole thing can, of course, be rationalised by suggesting that no intellectual achievement is ever made in complete isolation, and similarity of expression only goes to prove that the time is ripe for a particular idea. But that does not help.

Another thing to be noted with concern regarding the present situation is the role being played by S. L. Byrappa. He is a student of philosophy and is an adept in the narrating style. Whether it is the question of rebirth or the problem of the cow or the issue of untouchability, Byrappa has the ability to present his views in the most persuasive manner. With his readability goes the apparent credibility of his opinions. And that is where he has an edge over others who question reactionary points of view. He can mesmerise the gullible readers with Sanskrit quotations also as if these could be adequate substitutes for arguement and logic. In one of his novels, namely 'Daatu', he makes a peron of the scheduled caste defy orthodox opinion and force entry into the sanctum sanctorum of a temple. In the modern set up social constraints can't bar him from gaining entry into the temple for himself and others of his caste group. But the inner psychology of the person achieves what the discarded social constraints fail to achieve. He falls unconscious in the temple and the people of the village wash the temple with sacred waters after the event. Where Byrappa's heart lies in the episode is not hard to discern, but he couches it in mysticism and depth psychology. (Anantha Murthy has a progressive outlook towards this question in his 'Bharathipura' but puts it in a less impressionable form).

Other social and philosophical problems are similarly mystified by Byrappa while indirectly hinting that conservative judgment with regard to these issues is not to be brushed aside just like that. In his recent novel 'Parva', he retells the story of the 'Mahabharata' in the light of historicity, realism, and science. This neo-in-terpretative style is his

strong point, but his themes militate against progress all the same. He is a sworn enemy of modernism and his originality lends him firm support in his mission of consolidating hierarchical society.

Other traditional authors take the cue from him and they thus no longer write in the old way. That the new rebel movement is now a force to reckon with is amply illustrated by this. There are more women writers today than ever before and they could be classified the same way as their male counterparts. It is only in the sphere of drama that they have yet to register their presence in a significant way. Vijaya, however, has distinguished herself as the author of several street plays of considerable merit. Her themes range from the status of women to hypocrisy in the political field and the Chitra troupe has effectively taken her plays to the common man of the State.

An encouraging facet of today's Kannada literature is that it comes from an increasingly large number of authors whose proximity to the common man's life is unquestionably of a high order. Not only do many of them evince sympathy for mass struggles, bnt many of them are direct participants in struggles themselves. The new conciousness of the orthodox intellectual writers is occasioned by these writers in no small way.

Among them the young poet Siddalingaiah is the most significant. The rich suggestiveness of his imagery is highly refreshing and his themes are the most inspiring. The songs that he composed for the play 'Belchi' and his poems like 'Thousands of Rivers' are among the best poetic creations of the recent past. He promises to be a pace setter in a variety of ways. Himself a Dalith, he wages uncompromising battles against all forms of sectarianism and infuses confidence among all sections of the working people. We have in him a real people's poet and he is an active functionary of the rebel

movement of writers. In this sense, what Siddalingaiah is to poetry, that Devanur Mahadeva is to the short story.

Two other functionaries of the rebel writers' movement with similar characteristics are Baragur Ramachandrappa and Kalegowda Nagawara and they excel as novelists, short story writers and critics. The former in his recent novel "Seelunela" has devised a symbolism which has potentiality for further development and application. Indudhara Honnapura is another Dalith writer of high calibre. Chandrasekhara Patil, Buddanna Hingamire, Ramjan Darga, Besagarahalli Ramanna, B.V. Vaikuntaraju, B.Krishnamurthy, R.Poornima, C. Srinivasa Raju, G. S. Shivarudrappa, C. Veeranna, Meghamitra and a host of others have in recent years given truly invigorating poems, novels, short stories and plays.

There are some rebel writers, however, whose experiences are none too deep and authentic and their works are thus reminiscent of the creations of the period of the progressive literary movement. Their revolutionary fervour at times smacks of romanticism and even anarchism as their grasp of the socio-economic-cultural complex is not as yet fully mature and scientific.

This account will be incomplete if a reference is not made to two other epoch-making developments in the cultural life of Karnataka, namely the mass cultural movementbeing carried on by a group called 'samudaya' and the 25 volume publication of short stories of the world undertaken by Navakarnataka Publications. In addition to staging street plays in different corners of the State 'Samudaya' also produces sophisticated plays quite elegantly.

This group's work is complementary to the work of the rebel writers' movement. Navakarnataka Publications' ambitious project is already half way through, twelve volumes of stories from Africa, Vietnam, Australia, Soviet Union,

Poland, Czechoslovakia, Britain, India, etc., having come out so far. It is a project executed with imagination and dext erity. For the first time ever, the Kannada reading public has access to some of the best stories in all languages of the world. Most of the stories selected being progressive, the regional and national organs of the RSS have been pouring venom on the project and they see a systematic plan of 'communist subversion' in the project. This hysterical response is really uncalled for as the stories are nowhere near being incet ndiary bombs. But it must be said that the laudable eflor- would have been adequately campensated if the Chief Editor, Niranjana, had been more judicious in the selection of his material and if he had not prefaced the volumes with his long pedantic introductions in view of the fact that good literature communicates more effectively than any pedantry can.

To conclude, the Kannada literary world is throbbing with new life and with more visible hopeful signs. The struggle alone will have to determine the future course of Kannada literature for struggles in ideology go on in the literary world as much as in political life or even more than in political life.

Yakub Kolas, a great Byelorussian poet, wrote the following in 1904 :

Do not beg, and don't expect
Cheerful ballads from my lyre,
For, when I strike up my song,
Sorrow burns more fierce than fire.

I would laugh and joke with you.
And for you some fun would make,
But I look on life around,
And my heart begins to ache,

How unhappy is our lot :
We were given not a thing.
Do not seek the meadow flower.
For to us there came no spring.

To Karnataka as to the rest of India, that spring has not yet come. That enchanting spring is what we are dreaming of and working for. Meanwhile, the Kannada poets must egg us on to attain that spring. How near or far away it might be, history alone will tell.

—*Link*
August 15, 1981

SUPERSTITION OF POPULATION EXPLOSION

I belong to a country whose traditions in the sphere of population seem to have been defined in the **Upanishads** where self-multiplication is referred to as a cherished objective (bahu syam prajayeya)–a statement which an elderly gentleman used to quote frequently to me.

I do not know how to reconcile this with the other glorified state of the spiritual Indian—**Brahmacharya.** Gandhiji himself had no need to plan his family but he advocated self-continence as the only acceptable means of controlling population. But, as in many other details, the law of today seems to be to worship Gandhiji from a distance and not take his precepts too seriously.

I have a feeling that apart from the instinct of self-multiplication, there is an awful superstition responsible for our population growth, and I do not see how I can envy it. India is a sacred land with the profoundest of philosophical visions and wisdom; or at least it is said so by many who claim to be highly knowledgeable. I have read some of their fantastic discoveries like the one which says that it is hardly possible for man to attain salvation without being born in this sacred land of ours. That possibly explains the growth of population and the rate of that growth. It is to be highly regretted, perhaps, that we seek to block the path of salvation to many longing souls by checking the growth of population.

The first chapter of the **Bhagavadgita** dercribes the confusion and distress of Arjuna at the prospect of having to fight

the war. What a horror, he says, that so many will be killed ! And what is worse, how tragic that many a father will have to go without proper funeral rites and other follow-up rituals, with the result that no passports to heaven for these unfortunate ones may be issued(patanti pitaro hyesham luptapindodaka kriyah).

The reply of Krishna to the fears of Arjuna over the next seventeen chapters has not removed the apprehensions fully in the mind of the average orthodox Brahmin of India, and the question of Arjuna has persisted all through without altering the situation regarding funeral rites and the need for having a son for performing those rites. Who is to perform these deeds in the absence of a son, who is called a **putra** because he allegedly saves his parents from being consigned into a subdivision of hell, called "pum" (pum nama narkat trayate iti putrah)? So one must have a son. And one must try again and again till one succeeds in having a son. The best thing of course, would be to have that stupid part of hell totally obliterated so that superstitious fear may not contribute to the g r o w t h of population. An incentive to the orthodox Brahmins, who incidentally are highly potential multipliers of our population, could be a free return-ticket to Gaya to ensure their safe entry to heaven through the performance of the libation ceremonies even while being alive, and thus not depend on a dutiful son for this reward in after-life.

And then there is the question of people belonging to different religions and sects. "Belongingness" in the context of religion amounts in most of the cases to nothing more than following some blind rituals and rigidly observing some conservative traditions. This is obviously a peripheral attachment, but still a burden in so far as there is revulsion against control through external applications in many cases. The doctrines of self-continence, self-abnegation and the like are, as devices to check population, fine platform rhetorics and more than actual means in vogue. I have a fear that this suggestion cannot even be taken seriously.

I find from the statistics arrived at by a few demographers that during the so-called golden ages of Indian history, the population remained more or less static as the death rate cancelled the birth rate—a means of stabilising population at a certain given level—which is denied to us. And deaths in the process of coercion in this direction cannot certainly reach such high figures.

I am no good at figures at all, but still I gather that we are about a 600 million today with an annual increasing rate of 2.5 per cent. Between 1961 and 1971, we have increased by a remarkable 24.8 per cent and we are estimated to reach the 67 crore mark by 1981. But these calculations may be upset through active intervention. These are days when each one has been teaching another one and presumably, therefore, illiteracy is fast disappearing in our country. Fortunately for the "dynamic" leaders of the youth sector of a certain political party, I do not have figures to either substantiate or repudiate it. Similarly, what impact the then current "peaceful and persuasive" drive has on the growth of population is as yet unknown.

Let me make a simple assertion before proceeding further. The growth of Bangalore city has trespassed the superstitious llmits in all the four directions and the landmarks supposed to have been erected by the founder of the city, are all within the compass of the city now. But why ? The answer is easy to find. So long as the superstition lasts that industry must be centrally located in the capital city, the superstition about the limits of growth for the city of Bangalore will continue to be exploded. But that does not mean that we have reached the optimum level with regard to the facilities that can be provided, but are not.

I am reminded of what I had read in the newspapers some years ago. New York went without electricity for a night and nine months later there was a tremendous rush in the mater-

nity hospitals of New York and the hospitals were prepared for the rush. The more important indication is that the New-Yorkers had healthier habits and other forms of entertainment when they had electricity ! I am not suggesting that this must be taken very literally, but still a question arises. Could we say that Bangalore and our other cities provide adequate entertainment and health facilities to all sections of the community ? Is it also not observed that those with a higher standard of living have smaller families usually ? I want to pose the question exactly that way and not in its converse form, because not all small families have or can have a higher standard of living.

I proceed further and also suggest that small populations do not invariably lead to the utmost happiness in a country. Let us look at things somewhat closely. We have used science and technology considerably to contain the death rate ; but have we used science and technology fully for either controlling birth rate or, what is more desirable, for feeding those who are born but not yet dead ? My plea is that you cannot view "population explosion", or whatever you call it, as a problem in itself. It is related to the question of economic development.

Nobody has said that in India our resources-planning has been positive and fully growth-oriented. A country which raves mad about export-oriented production and embraces the diabolical Macnamara Plan, or goes in for export of raw materials on a very big scale and gloats over the Kudremukh iron ore project, has, frankly speaking, no consciousness of priorities, to say the least. In other words, counterposing population against development and the right conditions under which development becomes possible, is a mischief which unfortunately is not always recognised to be so.

In this context it will be worthwhile quoting C. P. Snow, who in his 1955 lecture in Cambridge on **Two Cultures**, said :

"It is technically possible to carry out the scientific revolution in India, Africa, South-east Asia, Latin America, and the Middle East, wihtin fifty years. There is no excuse for the Western man not to know this. And not to know that this is the one way out through the three menaces which stand in our way—Hydrogen bomb war, over-population, the gap between the rich and the poor—is one of the situations where the worst crime is innocence." And let us assure ourselves that we are not that innocent, much less ignorant.

To relate poverty with population, to the exclusion of all else, is to my mind the worst superstition in the thinking traditionally generated by the bourgeois economists and apologists of Western imperialism. I open my eyes and what do I see? Three or four factors: one, that Belgium is rich while her erstwhile colony, namely, Congo, is poor; two, that unemployment and poverty are not altogether missing in Belgium or even in the much bigger country, namely, the United States; three, that the size of the country and density of population in a country especially rich in natural resources, like, say, Brazil, does not automatically mean absence of poverty; and finally, that erstwhile rich imperial and colonial powers like England are in doldrums in spite of all their skills and science.

One has to draw appropriate deductions from this data. And the none too facile deduction is that echoing Malthusian and neo-Malthusian theories is to fall into a trap in the name of discussing the "problem of population." I submit that the first thing for us to do is to get over this superstition that population **per se** is the criminal, and that paradise will descend on earth with the reduction in population. May I remind that the United Nations which was aware of the menace of this superstition, had a very significant and purposeful motto in 1974, the year earmarked as the population year? And what was the motto?—"To promote Human Welfare and Development".

I shall refer to just one more interesting and gruesome anecdote. A few years ago, a Christian priest (not from South Africa) hit the headlines in the international press by delivering a sermon to the world at large. He had a bright idea and it was, according to him, a very reasonable solution to the problems of population and happiness in the world. "Sterilise the less intelligent so that we may have the new civilisation going with vigour," he said. In our context it was sometimes whispered that beggars must be castrated. Does it seem incredible? To me, it is more preposterous than incredible.

There is a powerful stranglehold on our minds which has made us incorrigibly superstitious, so much so we do not analyse our economy which has grown so wretched that it goes on swelling the ranks of the less intelligent and the beggars. What religio-philosophical sanction there can be for this ghastly superstition, I shall never be able to understand and appreciate.

It is not my intention to decry and reject many of the demographic programmes which need to be carried out. But I insist that they tend to become insufferable superstitions if they are isolated from programmes of social and economic change and transformation, if they are isolated from the battle for development which is the battle to take our own health into our own hands. Then these programmes will not help to solve any problems but will actually accentuate these problems, no matter how small or big the population itself be.

May it also be noted that population problems are inseparable from those relating to the status of women in society. We will be consuming another dose of superstition if we do not recognise this in our tradition-bound society. As it was noted at an international seminar on population and development: "It is certain that an improvement in the condition of women, the exercise of equal rights between men and women, equal access to education, to professional training and to

employment would contribute to the solution of population problems."

These then are the prospects and the hurdles. I am afraid that we will succumb to superstitions about the problems of population if we do not develop a long-range objective and perspective, and develop instead the scare from a paper tiger called "population exlosion".

It does not require extraordinary wisdom to recognise the irrationalism contained in the argument that India is infested with poverty because there are too many poor people in the country. The simple truth is that "exploitation is reduced to poverty and the explanation of poverty become the poor themselves"! (Based on the author's address before a seminar on population control, held early this year in Bangalore)

—*Mainstream*
June 18, 1977

MEN AND GOD-MEN

India, like many other countries, has produced luminaries of great repute. They have blazed the path for their successors. The illumination that they have provided has been a beacon of light for many a path-finder.

Every age has its own "prophets" who, through their identification with the struggling people and consciousness for a change, have worked along the path of emancipation of the people. They have professed that there is no short cut to salvation either of the individual or of the people as a whole. The rigours and the challenges must needs be faced before one realises the pleasing and glorious objective.

The arduousness of the path and the dreamy quality of the mind might, however. occasionally make one averse to facing the challenges vigorously and boldly. This may lead to different forms of escapism and romanticism. Subjectivism and susceptibility to hallucinations also flow from this. Illusory notions of god-men is one of the manifestations of this irrational outlook.

Wittingly or otherwise, both the alleged god-men and their votaries bring fine grist to the huge mill of the exploitative machinery and perpetuate the evils of the class system. The tragic aspect of it all is that they persuade others to believe that any disgusting phenomenon could be sold as wholesome provided that the garb of spiritualism is used to mask the ugliness of the said phenomenon. The monopoly

press and their proprietors are only too gleeful when they find some stuff which answers to this need.

The above observation is relevant in the context of the recent publication of a series of articles by the agents and spokesmen of an alleged god-man in our country. It is interesting to note that India has the unique distinction of being infested with the maximum number of these god-men. Not to be accused of discrimination on the basis of sex, we have a good sprinkling of god-women also. Whether these god-men and god-women are also good men and women is beside the point, for they have declared in no uncertain terms that any such analysis of their personalities is only fool hardy, and only the arrogant attempt it.

After the Bangalore University initiated a programme of investigating the alleged miracles performed by some godmen who, incidentally, abound in the State of Karnataka, there has been a wild fire raging on behalf of one of them, namely Sayi Baba. The Brindavan, where the Baba lives while in Bangalore, is the abode where congregations of demonstrative and dubious natures take place. It is blessed with the presence of the divine Baba and those who like to bask in the sunshine of the Baba's presence. Quite harmless as far as that. But the tall claims and the stunting of the sharp weapons of the people's struggles that are planned and executed therefrom make us apprehensive.

The coterie which gathers around the Baba consists of heavily paid scientists of the country, who learn their science at the feet of the Baba, ignoring the fundamentals they might have learnt earlier (and also oblivious of the fact that they are being paid out of the public exchequer), top executives of the administration, a few public servants called Ministers, retired and serving educationists, and the mentors of all these, namely, the enterprising industrialists, monopolists, landlords, stooges who serve the imperialist machinations, and the immediat

henchmen of all these. That is the real danger of the god-man called Baba, although the devotees of the Baba may not recognise this ramification.

Nor do the innocent investigators of the alleged miracles of the Baba seem to recognise this. The manner in which the superstructure is being fortified for making the base of the most heinous variety of exploitation in our country stable at least for the time being is several times forgotten by even some well-meaning critics of the Baba and his ism which is ardently publicised by such stalwarts like Dr. V. K. Gokak, former Vice-Chancellor of the Bangalore University.

Dr. Gokak is an oxford product, eminent professor of English, Ex-Director of the Central Institute of English, reputed literary critic and also a poet, exponent of Aurobindo admirer of Coleridge, and ever so many other things. But he is now best described as the disciple of the Baba, All his scholarship is utilised to "justify the ways of the Baba to man."

His second in this role is Dr. S. Bhagavatam, formerly connected with India's Defence in an important capacity. A few other incumbents of the Indian Institute of Science holding very responsible positions are close to the Baba brotherhood.

Baba has devotees from the most unexpected quarters like, to wit, the editor of a Bombay weekly, R. K. Karanjia who has declared that salvation for the world is possible only through the good offices of the Baba. This Editor is in the distinguished company of the "reputed" parliamentarian, industrialist and keyman of the Express group of newspapers, namely Sri Ramnath Goenka, who himself wrote a letter in the Indian Express pointing out the glory of the Baba and followed it up with a series of "scholarly" and "original" articles by Dr. Gokak, Dr. Bhagavantham and a host of others. A neat

certificate from Goenka must needs be enough to accept the credibility of the Baba!

The Bangalore University launches a campaign and immediately the Goenka–K. K. Birla press launches a counter-campaign. Draw your own conclusions, and if you cannot explain the role of the Bombay weekly, Blitz, (not of the Jain group, though) it is your headache. The Indian Express came out with a series of four articles by Gokak, and then Bhagavantham wrote on the scientific explorations into the lore of the Baba. And now Gokak has come out with a book on the Baba already reviewed with enthusiasm in the Baba press.

This hyper-activity is rather intriguing and, thus, it may be interesting to analyse the thesis presented so copiously by Gokak in what he might rightly consider to be his master-piece. His breath–taking discoveries about the Baba, his analysis of spiritualism, his thorough–going mastery of the sciences and the social sciences whose total embodiment the Baba is, the immaculate ethics that Baba stands for and that Gokak understands, and other details are all worthy of the greatest attention if not also of the least acceptance.

It is rather strange that all these crusades shuold have become necessary for the Baba–a god–man–simply because some man called the bluff about the god! He needed the Gokaks,the Bhagavanthams and the Goenkas to defend himself. How could the Bombay editor Karanjia remain on the side lines when so many worthies were battling for saving the honour of god almighty?

Gokak avers that the god-man called Sayi Baba is an i rresolvable enigma for any sincere analyser. His countenance displays unfathomable expressions climaxed by the aura created by the hair on his head. What Gokak seems to forget to tell us is what there might be or not be in the head of the Baba. But that need not be doubted at all because the Baba himself

reads the letters addressed to him, no matter what language it is written in. Why the Baba should read them instead of simply divining the whole thing which would be so much more simple, we do not quite know.

The Baba also replies to the letters himself; provided, presumably, that they are not about his alleged miracles as the letter of the Bangalore University which went unreplied, was. The present author's letter about the affairs of the Sayi Baba college remained unreplied, too. But that was three years ago when the college had its whims unregulated. The problem must have been solved in the meeting the Baba reportedly holds to discuss matters relating to the college and hospital that the Baba runs.

It is a mild surprise that the God-man cannot communicate his decisions or will in the best interests of the institutions without holding committee meetings in the afternoons like mundane mortals. It is unfortunate that some meetings of this kind should have proved abortive considering the way the institutions are run in some respects.

Gokak also gives us a glimpse of the daily routine of the Baba. The itinerary reads like that of a philanthropic playback singer of the film world, which the Baba would have been if the illusions of godhood had been dispensed with.

The mission of life that the Baba has set for himself is "to uphold **Dharma** and the law, restore India to her former glory of spirit, and bring the world back to the message of Spirit" as Gokak puts it. The first part of it was also the life's mission of the venerable M. S. Golwalkar who has left others to accomplish the task unfinished by him, and among them the total revolutionary Sri Jayaprakash Narayan.

Developing aversion towards the present because it involves hardship, to overcome which one has to fight collec-

tively, is one avenue of escapism ; it also serves the purpose of rationalising the present as irredeemable, in which case the best compromise is acceptance of the situation as it presents itself. This is the philosophy which has chained the people of this country through the ages and the Baba and his cronies are the contemporary instruments of this ignoble philosophy which is given a fine colouring to hide its wretchedness. From this to the romanticisation of poverty and its causes is not a long road.

Further, the glib talk of the restoration of the glory of the past may sound nauseating to all students of history because of its being contrary to the laws of development of society, its civilisation and culture. But Gokak and his likes need not bestow any attention to all these things, intoxicated with the god-man consciousness as they are. And, thus, he resorts to the poetic flights of fancy when he declares with a flourish that in the Baba "One can find the healing touch of the Christ and the heart-easing speech of the Buddha". We have no right to accuse Gokak of being a realist anyway.

The learned Dr. Gokak proceeds to point out that "the uniqueness of Baba lies in the fact that he did not have to practise any penance or achieve any **Siddhi** or realisation in this life. He was born with them". Like the Baba, possibly the disciples of the Baba are also born disciples !

How can they then acquire any newtrait ? **Siddhis** are a hindrance to the development in the path of the achievement of **Kaivalya** (liberation) according to the author of the **Yoga Sutras**, whether the **Siddhis** are inborn or acquired. The right spiritual mould is also blunted with the manifestation of the **Siddhis** and if they are employed.

The Baba must have been fascinated by the **Siddhis** over-much in order to sacrifice the higher spiritual path ! If you claim that he is also the highest spiritual giant in spite of,

or because of, the **Siddhis**, then it must be said that the Baba is caught in a bundle of contradictions in the traditional view.

All the same, the Baba is reputed as having performed the most astounding medical feats which are inexplicable in the background of the medical knowledge that we possess. Some sceptics might say that it is incredible more than being inexplicable.

In this connection, one could refer to the evidence tendered by a certain lady in the Bombay weekly which is giving publicity to the Baba. The lady "proved" that the Baba is div.ne in content by saying that her husband, a devotee of the Baba, was saved from getting killed in an accident by the will of Baba. The said gentleman was to have travelled by some bus which later met with an accident. Lo and behold, the will of the Baba had intervened and the man had not travelled by that bus at all. Thus the man was saved. The lady visited the spot of the accident and found that the driver and others in the bus had been very badly injured.

The crucial question to prove the divinity of the Baba is not whether X was saved or not; the question is, why was the accident itself not averted? What a monstrous partiality of the god-man if he saves his acquaintance and abandons the other one, a worker!

Such accidents take place only now; god did not ordain that such accidents should take place even now, say, in our villages whcih have yet to witness that change towards mechanisation. God did not allow anyone to be killed in such accidents before the machine was invented by man. Man thus seems to be the ordainer of himself. And yet the Baba must be credited with the saving of some life. The incident really proves nothing about the Baba.

Added to that, the products of the alleged miracles of the

Baba doled out as gifts to the coterie of his are not unknown or novel products. He gives, to wit, the Swiss Watches. The interesting part of it is that the disciples of the lower classes invariably get only ash; those of the higher classes may get golden rings, wrist watches, and images for worship. There is unfortunately no instance of the Baba having presented a meal as a miracle-product gift to anyone.

Dr. Gokak asserts that these gifts are made by the Baba only for drawing the disciples to the world of the Spirit. What did Sri Ramakrishna present as gifts to draw others to the path of the spirit?

In this connection, we may refer to a rather revealing story. Adjacent to the Baba's hermitage in Bangalore is a factory which makes ice-cream. The Baba gets his supply of ice cream from here. The erstwhile President of the Employees' Uuion who died in a tragic accident in May 1976, Comrade Gopi, once made a bold suggestion: "Why does the Baba take the ice cream made by us, the workers? Let him come here and we shall give him all the raw materials used in the making of the ice cream. Let him then make his own cream. If he cannot make it with all the raw materials, what are the chances of his making without them? If he cannot make even ice cream with his much talked about miracles, are not the workers more skilful and useful?" The Baba, let us hope, will some day accept the challenge which is only a suggestion.

But Dr. Gokak is not given to this kind of a rational outlook. For him the colourful sentences of his are the last word. It seems to be forgotten that big imposing sentences by themselves do not become convincing, in spite of Dr. Gokak. Hence his statement that "he (the Baba) can sport and prattle away like an innocent child and at the same time, be a more shrewd judge of men and events than any statesman or diplomat" remains unsubstantiated and unsubstantiable.

Gokak adds that the Baba is self-effacing and thus advised an American to wait for ten years before writing the biography of the Baba lest haste make for unpleasantness later on. It is surprising that the Baba did not tender the same advice to the Bombay editor or to Gokak. The latter has come out with a biography of the Baba with top speed after the controversy about the god-man assumed a sizable proportion. Presumably, it was thought desirable to do so in order to smother "the vicious attack" on the god-man !

The self-effacing Baba rose to the level of any ordinary being only the other day when he openly declared in a metting in Lalbagh, Bangalore, that the moon does not blush if the dogs bark at it. He was referring to his moonness obviously. The divine man had to quote a proverb of the masses to justify his pride, and he is self-effacing, according to Gokak.

This world must, however, suffer the god-man for a long time yet to come, because he has decided to live on till the age of 96. He will be declared to be 96 on the day of his death, we may guess. In any case, it means that his commitment to play the role of the saviour during the twentieth century is irreversible.

We no longer need be haunted with thoughts of the annihilation of the world consequent to a nuclear holocaust, because the world, we are assured, will be there for the Baba to save it. Even detente is an unnecessary concept considering that the Baba is there to save us. Baba believes in planning also as may be deduced from the fact that he has plans to take birth in a village in the Mandya district of Karnataka after his death at 96. Whether this plan will end up the way the plans of the "socialist republic of India" have is anybody's guess.

The painful thing for us is that the god-man should also think only in terms of the small world of Karnataka for taking birth in order to save humanity. What an ugly limit to the

manifold scope of the god-man ! Why not go to America to take birth because most of the persons whom the Baba is now "saving" come from that land ? Or is it that it is predestined that he must "save" them by being in Karnataka ?

"Saving" means "serving the interests", if there is any confusion in anybody. We are indeed flattered here in Karnataka. Every saviour comes to us first. Dom Moraes is presently here to serve us. We are assured of the continued presence of the Baba. Only those Krishna-cultists have gone to West Bengal first. The Bangla border must have attracted them ; but later they may also go over here.

Baba is an incarnation, Gokak tells us. What might that be now ? Gokak explained it avidy and vividly to an American newspaperman in 1974. Poor mortals like us cannot understand such intricate matters even if we known some English. The wonder of wonders that Gokak reports relates to the dropping of ash from the photograph of the Baba in America also. Why is there so much marvelling about the ash ? Is ash such a rare commodity to marvel at in this world ? You can collect a sack of it from any railway station in this country on any day of your choice !

Not so the alchemy providing the Baba's cure for the incurable diseases. He cures such diseases with the dynamism of love. If in Charles Bradlaugh's tradition, we were to tell the god-man : "I can't believe ; strike me dead if you dare", the dynamically loving Baba in his mercy will only quip like the Christ : "Forgive them, my Lord ; they know not what they say". What a refreshing thing to know. And yet the Baba became furious and called names only recently when it was put to him that his claims might have to be investigated before being accepted.

The tenor of Dr. Gokak's thesis being now familiar to us, we may run through his second and subsequent articles on the

Baba with greater ease. To listen to the singing of the Baba is "to experience the process of a social revolution in progress before our eyes and in our very ears". "The divine ashes the Baba gives is an austere symbol of what he wishes to suggest".

To some, however, he suggests through gold ! The meaning obviously is that some will go to dust and others will wallow in the ill-gotten wealth. A millionaire was once presented with a golden ring to admonish him. "To those who have, more shall be given". "Truth, Beauty, Goodness, Love and Power are abstractions and one does not know where to findthem", says Gokak. One may hope that they may not be found in the Baba also.

But the ingenuity of the Baba is simply maddening. He "created for a biologist, an image of the missing link". Whose prototype was that ? Such mischievous questions cannot be encouraged. Baba "uses water as petrol and transforms particles of sand into a beautiful golden image." There are those amongst us who use petrol as water and they are the nearest disciples of the Baba. With Baba to assist us, there is no longer any sense in going in for Indo-Soviet collaboration to improve our oil potential through further explorations. Instead, we must sign an Indo-Sayi pact and do away with the rigs because the Baba believes only in rags.

Baba has made a tree in his orchard the receptacle of fruits of all kinds. The merchants of Bangalore being fools, they still write to Kashmir and obtain them to sell here. Baba is an economist par excellence and he knows the solution for solving the problems of our economy. Only he will not do it as some of us do not allow him to do it the way he chooses.

Let us quote Gokak at some length as it unmasks the Baba and his masquerading disciples once and for all : "Baba has spelt out his own version of the social sciences. His

version is not the socialism of under-payment. It is rather an economics based on love—putting the rich on his guard and making him realise, in his bones, that he is the trustee, and not the owner of his wealth. A trusteeship based on love is the foundation on which the science of economics should be reared". The cat is out of the nasty bag now. All Babaism ultimately is to justify the ways of capitalism to the suffering aod oppressed people !

The oppressed also want to make the exploiters realise in **their** bones that exploitation will not be tolerated and will be done away with. One-third of the world has already made its erstwhile exploiters realise this concretely. Even the Gandhian economists have more or less stopped talking about the trusteeship theory. Baba is certainly not the first to come up with the profound theory of trusteeship. His beguiling trick will not work as those of others have failed in the past.

The oppressing classes have always advised the oppressed to abjure the class war and Gokak is now playing that role on behalf of the Baba in the name of spiritualism, godhood of the man called Baba, and other such deceptive stratagems Nobody will be taken in by these clever but disgusting tricks. **Status quoism** is more prevalent in the Baba than in any other brand of politicians. And that is the gist of Babaism.

The spokesman of the Baba, namely Dr. Gokak, must be thanked profusely for frankly admitting what lies behind all the intriguing designs of the Baba. Saying that the Baba is the best medicine-man, sociologist, psychologist, philosopher and what have you, will be so much of nonsense when we know that all these and other disciplines have evolved through the ages and will continue in the centuries to come.

Knowledge at any given stage of history is incomplete and imperfect and that is why there is the quest to expand the vista

of knowledge and thereby acquire greater freedom for mankind. This is what stimulates man to ever new adventures in the sphere of knowledge. If there are a few questions or even thousands of them for which we do not know the answers today, we need not jump to the conclusion that the answers will never be found. Past history is an indication of the way future history will shape itself.

The earthquake in China has proved beyond any doubt that in a planned society relief measures are better designed than in an unplanned society. The future society will be increasingly of that fashion. Knowledge will be the strongest weapon in the hands of man to civilise himself and rise to a higher level. That is what no Baba will or can accomplish. That is what man collectively achieves.

Dr. Gokak obviously does not want this to be recognised. For him the wisdom of the Baba is the beginning and the end. Hypothesis is never the substitute for correct knowledge. The stalwarts who take the Baba as their ultimate guide have taken the hypothesis for the Ultimate truth and that is precisely where they are wrong and also dishonest to the precepts of Science. A few barren articles in the Goenka press or even in a Bombay weekly by men however reputed they be, will not make any difference to this incontrovertible phenomenon.

The cloak of spiritualism for swindling the gullible masses has been stained with blood in the past and it is too late in the day for the Baba and Gokaks to use it again. Mae's destiny is more glamorous and inviting and he shall not stop short of reaching that enchanting and just state.

—Mainstream
Oct. 23, 1976

The essence of Marxism is that while it remains firmly based on the material universe, it includes the whole range of human experience, the past as well as the present. It deals with society in its productive relations; with the economic and legal forms which have grown out of these relations: and with the whole ideology of science and art and religion, that forms the superstructure of the productive and economic life of society. By relating all these together and by ceaselessly reviewing their relations Throughout changes which society undergoes, and never more rapidly than now, it has a comprehensiveness no other philosophy has ever approached.

—J. D. BERNAL

The essays, articles and reviews included in this anthology bear testimony to the fact that as a part of the wider economic and political struggles of the toiling masses against the ruling classes, a relentless struggle has to be waged also on the ideological front to dislodge the deep-rooted reactionary popular beliefs and doctrines that have been created and propagated through the centuries by the vested interests

Thus explains the polemical nature of the writings through what makes them delightful and absorbing to read is their barbed and vigorous humour coupled with the basic incisive analysis found in them of the diverse phenomena that interest the author

Analysis and interpretation of the philosophical heritage of India are Dr GR's true forte Of the four review articles in the collection, three are those of books by Dr. Debiprasad Chattopadhyaya and one by Arun Shourie They underline the Marxist approach to Indian Philosophy

The author's awareness of his social responsibilities have induced him to make his reviews not only critical but also expository so that they become accessible even to non-specialists That the Marxist critic in bourgeois society must not only be a critic but a publicist as well is in keeping with the combative and egalitarian traditions of Marxist writing And above all, whether he is reviewing a book by a profound scholar like Chattopadhyaya or noting and commenting on current trends in Kannada Literature or musing on the Human Rights Day or examining the Gīta or vivisecting certain socio-economic problems of today GR never fails to illumine and provoke. For, every Page of this book is a creative evidence of the thought, a hundred years after his death, of the 'Living Marx'.